

TEXT, POWER, AND KINGSHIP IN MEDIEVAL
GUJARAT, C. 1398-1511

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Abstract of Thesis

Text, Power, and Kingship in Medieval Gujarat, c. 1398 – 1511

Despite the growing interest in the region of Gujarat, its pre-colonial history remains a neglected area of research. The dissertation is an attempt at redressing this gap, as well as at developing an understanding of the role of literary culture in the making of local polities in pre-modern South Asia.

The dissertation explores the relationship between literary texts and political power. It specifically focuses on the fifteenth century, which coincides with the rise of the regional sultanate, which, along with the sultanates of Malwa, Deccan, and the kingdoms of Mewad and Marwar, emerged as an important power in the politics of South Asia in this period.

As the sultans consolidated their influence in Gujarat, they were forced to negotiate with a variety of locally powerful chieftains. These negotiations lie at the heart of the narratives studied here. Organised as a series of case studies, the main body of the dissertation focuses on epic poems in Old Gujarati and Sanskrit produced in the courts of these chieftains, as well as an epic poem from the court of Sultan Mahmūd Begadā (1458-1511).

In the latter part of the dissertation, the focus shifts to another literary terrain, also associated with the warrior elite of Gujarat. It analyses the oral 'bardic' narratives as presented by Alexander Forbes (1821-1865) in his *Rās Mālā: Hindoo Annals of the Province of Goozerat in Western India* (1856). Through the analysis of these narratives from the medieval and colonial periods, the dissertation considers different aspects of power and kingship as constructed in the literary traditions of Old Gujarati and Sanskrit.

Aparna Kapadia
SOAS, London
2009

This is to certify that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Aparna Kapadia
SOAS, London
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London

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Note on Transliteration

Place names: For all place names such as Gujarat, Ahmedabad, Saurashtra, Delhi and so on, modern English spellings have been used, except when the name is archaic or is used in a transcription from an inscription or text.

Personal names: Those of Indic origin have been transliterated according to modern Gujarati or Sanskrit pronunciation. Those of Perso-Arabic origin have been transliterated according to the scheme in Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, (which is itself a modified version of the scheme used in the *Encyclopedia of Islam*). However, complete consistency has not been achieved for the latter for technical reasons.

Group and miscellaneous names: Names that are well-known in English such as Hindu, Brahmin, Kshatriya, sultan have been rendered according to standard English spellings. Less known and medieval terms have been transliterated with diacritics.

Book titles that are not in English: These have been transliterated according to their common pronunciation in the relevant language.

Dates: Only Common Era dates have been used throughout.

Translations: All translations are my own, unless otherwise specified.

List of Abbreviations

ABORI	<i>Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute</i>
CG	<i>Chaulukyas of Gujarat</i>
EI	<i>Epigraphia Indica</i>
FGST	<i>Fārbas Gujarātī Sabhā Traimāsik</i> (Forbes Gujarati Sabha Quarterly)
GPVN	<i>Gaṅgadāsapratāpavilāsanāṭakam</i>
HIG	<i>Historical Inscriptions of Gujarat</i>
IA	<i>Indian Antiquary</i>
IESHR	<i>Indian Economic and Social History Review</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JESHO	<i>Journal of the Social and Economic History of the Orient</i>
JIH	<i>Journal of Indian History</i>
MAS	<i>Modern Asian Studies</i>
MHJ	<i>Medieval History Journal</i>
MNC	<i>Māṇḍalikaṇṇpacarita</i>
MA	<i>Mirat-i-Aḥmadi</i>
MS	<i>Mirat-i-Sikandari</i>
PO	<i>Poona Orientalist</i>
RC	<i>Raṇmallachanda</i>
RVMK	<i>Rājavinodamahākāvyaṃ</i>
SH	<i>Studies in History</i>

Map of Gujarat Denoting Key Places Mentioned in the Thesis



Note: The map is not to scale

Introduction

When Amir Temür (Tamerlane) and his army attacked the frontiers of Delhi in the winter of 1398, the ruling sultanate under Muḥammad Shāh (Muḥammad II) was already crumbling. The rule of the Delhi sultans had become fraught with rebellion under Muḥammad bin Tughluq (1325-1351); the latter had, in fact, met his death during a campaign to quell a rebellious noble supported by the rulers of Sindh. His successor, Fīrūz Shāh (1351-1388), was also in no position to regain the lost territories in which former nobles had gradually begun to distance themselves from the authority of Delhi.¹ In addition to this, later years of his reign were replete with civil strife, at the end of which, his son, Muḥammad Shāh, was able to take the throne and establish a temporary peace. However, in the face of the

¹ Simon Digby, in an influential essay on the relationship between the capital city and the provinces, has argued that before Timür's attack, provincial centres of power had already started growing in influence during the fourteenth century to the detriment of the political authority in Delhi. See Simon Digby, "Before Timur Came: Provincialization of the Delhi Sultanate through the Fourteenth Century," *JESHO*, 47, 3 (2004): 298-356. Somewhat earlier, K.S. Lal demonstrated the gradual rise of these provincial centres of power, particularly Gujarat, Malwa, and Jaunpur, through a study of the internal dynamics of the Tughluq and Lodi governments during the fifteenth century. See K.S. Lal, *Twilight of the Sultanate: A Political, Social and Cultural History of the Sultanate of Delhi from the Invasion of Timur to the Conquest of Babur, 1398-1526* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1980). Lal also argued that while this was a period (1398-1526) of political decline, it was a time of great progress and achievement in the social and cultural spheres. For an account of the multiple levels of political rivalries in this period see Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate. A Political and Military History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Recently, historians have gone beyond this traditional division between political and cultural processes and have presented a more nuanced understanding of the development of regional traditions in the context of the Delhi Sultanate's decline. For examples of general surveys of Indian history which incorporate this understanding of regions see Herman Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund, *A History of India* (London: Routledge, 2004 [1990]); John Keay, *India: A History* (London: HarperCollins, 2000); Catherine B. Asher and Cynthia Talbot, *India Before Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). These general histories make the important contribution of doing away with the idea of the 'decline' of medieval polities and focus on the continuities that tend to get overshadowed in the traditional periodisation of Indian history into the 'Ancient,' 'Medieval,' and 'Modern'.

Mongol attack, Muḥammad Shāh, who by then was only left with Delhi and its outskirts, could not rely on his badly equipped army or on support from neighbouring kingdoms and was eventually forced to flee. After being refused shelter in Gujarat, he took refuge in Malwa, and was to only return as sultan to what remained of his kingdom in Delhi a few years later in c. 1405.

It has now been widely accepted that Temür's sack of Delhi dealt the final blow to the dwindling fortunes of the Delhi Sultanate. Historians have also agreed that the century that followed this attack saw the emergence of a number of regional kingdoms and sultanates. While the foundations of kingdoms such as the Bahamani Sultanate and Vijayanagara had been laid somewhat earlier, others like the sultanates of Gujarat, Malwa, and Jaunpur, came into their own in this period. Thus, the fifteenth century, which was once viewed as a period of decay and decline in the colonial and nationalist historiographies of India, along with the medieval period as a whole, has recently been rehabilitated as a time in which creative political and cultural processes from the preceding centuries continued and were reconfigured in new ways.

The fifteenth century was a period during which the agrarian frontier continued to expand, a process that had been underway since at least the fifth century.² Similarly, mercantile and political networks continued to flourish and new religious and cultural traditions emerged alongside older forms facilitated by the varieties of devotional *ṣūfī* and *bhakti* sects that were patronised by the elites and populace alike. Similarly, new kings and sultans drew on older Indic models of governance and kingship as well as the Islamicate traditions giving rise to regional

² B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *The Making of Early Medieval India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999 [1994]).

variants.³ Thus, in the regional polities that emerged out of the Delhi Sultanate's fall, Indic and sultanate practices blended, producing a variety of distinctive cultural traditions. As the centre of political action shifted from Delhi to military competition between the regions, the rulers and local elite also sought to validate and consolidate their rule through cultural productions like literary texts, architecture, and painting. As in other parts of the medieval world, regional and local rulers of India also attracted poets to their dynastic centres so that they would praise their accomplishments and promote their reign. Similarly, poets were often able to travel beyond the court of one particular patron to serve the needs of other kings, chieftains, and sultans through their literary representations. The fifteenth century was thus a period of political and cultural transformations that drew on elements from the multiple traditions that existed in the subcontinent.

PRINCIPAL THEMES

This dissertation examines representations of kingship and sovereignty in the fifteenth century. It focuses on the region of Gujarat, which remains one of the least studied areas of the subcontinent. In the fifteenth century, Gujarat emerged as one of the most prosperous and powerful regional kingdoms due to its close links with the flourishing Indian Ocean trade networks as well as benefiting from its long history of control over important coastal and overland trade routes that

³ The term 'Islamicate' refers to the composite culture and society that developed under the Muslim rulers and consisted of both Islamic and non-Islamic elements. This term differs from the word 'Islamic' which refers to the culture of Muslim religious practice.

connected it to the rest of the subcontinent.⁴ The specific analytical issue I address in this dissertation is the relationship between literary texts and political power under the Gujarat sultanate, which dominated the region from c. 1407 to 1572. As this dynasty, sometimes also referred to as the Muḏaffarīd sultans, established their rule over Gujarat, they encountered the locally powerful warrior elites or chieftains of the region, who had adopted what we might think of as an open-ended Kshatriya *varṇa* status, and were subsequently styled as 'Rajputs'. While the sultans displaced these men, they were never entirely able to destroy their political structures, which continued to endure into the Mughal, Maratha, and British times. Under British rule, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, most of the chieftaincies were assigned the status of 'princely' or 'native' states.⁵ It would seem then that the political formations that emerged in the fifteenth century have also left traces on the longer history and perhaps even on the contemporary politics of the region.

On the eve of India's independence, nearly half of the native states of the country were located in the Bombay Presidency. Of these, most were in what is the modern state of Gujarat. Here, there was a dense patchwork of states, stretching from the peninsula of Kathiawar, inland across Gujarat, and connecting up with those of Rajputana and Central India. These chieftains became a major concern for the Congress government immediately after independence. The issue of their

⁴ For a history of Gujarat's internal trade routes until the fourteenth century see V.K. Jain, *Trade and Traders in Western India (AD 100-1300)* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1990). André Wink has also demonstrated how the balance of power in the Indian regional context was affected by the shifts in the Indian Ocean trade. See André Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), vols 1 and 3.

⁵ See Ian Copland, *The British Raj and the Indian Princes: Paramountcy in Western India, 1857-1930*. (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1982), pp. 4-5.

relationship with the Republic of India was a complicated one and it was finally thanks to the efforts of the then Home Minister, Vallabhabhai Patel, that the terms of settlement with these states were negotiated and implemented. The reverberations of these struggles, however, are sometimes visible even today as some of the former 'native' states such as Kutch are demanding independence from the federal state.⁶

Here, I focus on literary narratives produced against the political background of conflict and negotiation in the fifteenth century in order to understand the representations of kingship in the regional context. The overarching theme that runs throughout the dissertation is that of the intimate interplay between literary texts and political power. I seek to explore how literary texts, their contents, languages, genres, and producers, served the political needs of their patrons. The manner in which composers or writers viewed their protagonists contributed to the process by which the latter's position was to be projected within and beyond their realms.

Thus, through a close reading of these narratives, I analyse three aspects of medieval kingship in Gujarat. First, and primarily, I focus on the local chieftains and on Gujarati and Sanskrit narratives produced under their patronage. The representations of their rule in these, I argue, contributed to maintaining their political and social positions in the face of the imperial authority of the Gujarati Sultanate as well as their own local rivals. The use of Sanskrit facilitated the reinforcement of this local position, rather than taking their fame to distant lands. Secondly, I discuss the Muslim sultans' patronage of similar Sanskritic literary

⁶ See Edward Simpson, "The 'Gujarat' Earthquake and the Political Economy of Nostalgia," *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 39, 2 (2005): 219-249.

traditions. In this case, I suggest that the use of pre-existing literary devices to represent the sultans formed an essential element in the assertion of their primacy over their regional and extra-regional rivals. Finally, I analyse representations of kingship in fifteenth-century Gujarat through the colonial collections of oral narratives of the *bhāṭṣ* and *cāraṇs*, the traditional genealogist historians associated with the Rajput chieftains. The early-nineteenth century representations of pre-colonial kingship also served the need of the colonial state, and, as this study seeks to demonstrate, implicated and encompassed a variety of Indians in the networks of colonial power.

OBJECTIVES

Despite the growing significance of the regional polities of pre-colonial India, Gujarat remains a neglected area of study. The region in its contemporary form only came into existence after independence in 1960, as a part of a long movement to divide the former Bombay State into the linguistic states of Gujarat and Maharashtra. Yet, Gujarat has had a much longer and complex history of settlement stretching back to over four millennia and occupied a prominent role in cosmopolitan Indian Ocean trade networks. Recently, Gujarat has loomed large in the contemporary politics of India and the memories of the communal violence of 2002 and its aftermath remain alive in related popular and scholarly debates. Yet, with the exception of Samira Sheikh,⁷ there have been no recent attempts at

⁷ See Samira Sheikh, "State and Society in Gujarat, c. 1200-1500: The Making of a Region" (PhD Dissertation, University of Oxford, 2003), "Bilingual Inscription from Gujarat, c. 1400-1500: Some Preliminary Observations," paper presented at the conference, *After Timur Came: Multiple Spaces of Cultural Production and Circulation in Fifteenth-century North India* (SOAS, London, 2007), "Alliance,

recovering the region's early and medieval histories. The debates about the relationships between literary traditions, political structures, and religious practices, which have been so vibrant in relation to the pre-colonial pasts of other parts of the subcontinent (notably, Rajasthan, the Deccan, and Tamilnadu), have not yet touched Gujarat.⁸ The present study then is an attempt at redressing this lacuna, as well as at connecting this important region to the lively scholarly debates on the pre-colonial regional polities of South Asia.

Recently, historians and anthropologists have explored aspects of kingship in pre-colonial India. However, these studies have either concentrated on the structural aspects of the 'state' and on state formation or on the political dimensions of kingship. Both these approaches have furthered our knowledge of the social history of kingship, an institution that was an important and integral part of pre-colonial society. Yet, the ideological aspects of kingship, and the manner in which these were reconfigured in specific contexts, remain an under-developed area of research. Thus, another objective of this study is to contribute towards an understanding of regional kingship in the second millennium by focusing on its representations in texts produced within courtly spaces.

Genealogy and Political Power: The Cuḍāsamās of Junāgaḍh and the Sultans of Gujarat," *MHJ*, 11,1 (2008): 29-61.

⁸ For examples of such studies on Rajasthan see, for example, Norman P. Ziegler, "Marwari Historical Chronicles: Sources for the Social and Cultural History of Rajasthan," *IESHR*, 13, 2 (1976): 219-255 and Norman P. Ziegler and Richard D. Saran, trans., *The Mēṭīyo Rāthors of Mēṭo, Rājasthan: Select Translations Bearing on the History of a Rājput Family, 1462-1660*, 2 vols (Michigan: Centre for South and South Asian Studies, 2001); for the Deccan, Richard M. Eaton, *A Social History of the Deccan, 1300-1760: Eight Indian Lives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); for Tamilnadu, Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance: Court and State in Nāyaka Period Tamilnadu* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992); for Andhra, Cynthia Talbot, *Precolonial India in Practice: Society, Religion, and Identity in Medieval Andhra* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

The nature of pre-colonial kingship became an important concern for the early colonial rulers of India. As the British acquired more territory during the first half of the nineteenth century, they became interested in understanding indigenous land tenures and the nature of sovereignty and rule in the areas that they came to control. In nineteenth-century Gujarat, this was a particularly important concern as British officials were confronted with a vast number of chieftains, kings, and nawabs. The colonial government's policies were, in fact, shaped on the basis of the relations between these traditional rulers, many of whom had descended from a common ancestral lineage. Unlike Rajasthan, however, the chieftains of Gujarat had not been integrated into the political networks of the Mughal state and consequently their organisation was somewhat different from other western Indian Rajput kingdoms. The situation in Gujarat also differed from the native states in other parts of India, as nowhere else were they found in such a large concentration. As the following section will demonstrate, scholars, mainly anthropologists, have explored the practical aspects of the early British encounters with the native states, but these studies do not focus on the textual, representative, and ideological aspects of this encounter. Commensurate with the objective of developing our understanding of the textual representations of kingship in the pre-colonial regional context, this study therefore also aims at furthering the understandings of colonial representations of medieval kingship.

METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

I approach the history of kingship in fifteenth-century Gujarat through a close reading and exposition of a body of literary narratives. These narratives, originally composed in Gujarati and Sanskrit, can be categorised as textual traditions

produced in three different courtly contexts. In locating the texts within the specific social sites I follow Dominick LaCapra in viewing them as the 'place' where a long tradition and specific time intersect.⁹ A text is thus never an 'autonomous node' but must always be located within a wider relational network. In that, it interacts not only with the social processes of the moment in which it is produced, but also with cultural practices that are prevalent and recognised during that particular time and space and therefore is implicitly connected to previous textual articulations.

Implicit in this approach is the assumption that texts are not the products of a single authorial intent, but are constructed through a variety of social agents. As Ronald Inden has suggested, authors may be 'simple' individuals holding a specific social position or "complex in the sense that their composition consists of responses to other authors."¹⁰ Thus, a text is not made up of an abstract 'essence' written into it by a discrete author, but is the product of multiple social processes and agents. In this regard, it is not only framed by the author's relationship to his or her social environment (patrons, readers, audiences, and performers) but also by the constraints of genres and the contemporary literary traditions.

Further, I do not view the texts studied here simply as 'symbols' or 'representations' of their particular 'contexts,' but as having a dialogic relationship with the elements that make up those contexts. I seek to understand

⁹ Dominick LaCapra, "Rethinking Intellectual History and Reading Texts," *History and Theory*, 19, 3 (1980), p. 260.

¹⁰ Ronald Inden, "Introduction" to Ronald Inden, Jonathan Walters, and Daud Ali, *Querying the Medieval: Texts and the History of Practices in South Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 11.

what Gabrielle Spiegel has called the “social logic of the text.”¹¹ The social logic of the text refers to the different social, cultural, and psychological elements that make up the historical moment in which the text is produced and contribute to the making of the text itself. In order to meaningfully understand texts from a particular historical period then the historian must keep these specificities in mind.¹² In addition to this, it must also be remembered that as much as texts are constituted by their particular historical moments, they in turn influence the ideologies and social impulses of that moment. Thus the creators of medieval literary texts, for instance, were concerned with “legitimation for their propagandist and political goals,” rather than with factual history.¹³ In their works, these authors were able to displace the past in order to incorporate what was polemic and prescriptive.¹⁴ This is true of medieval texts from Europe as well as South Asia and in studying these it is important to keep, as far as possible, social and cultural engagements of their authors and audiences in mind. The use of this framework for analysing literary texts allows us to unpack many of the political, economic, and social pressures that condition a cultural discourse at any given period of time.

As noted, I focus on texts from three courtly contexts. The first of these contexts is that of the local chieftains or ‘little kings’ of Gujarat. As these men

¹¹ Gabrielle M. Spiegel, “History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text,” in *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (London and Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp. 25-28. For more on this concept also see Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995 [1993]).

¹² In this aspect, Spiegel views a text as an “artefact of historiography.” Spiegel, “Introduction” to *The Past as Text*, p. xii.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. xiii.

strove to protect their patrimonies and sovereignty vis-à-vis the new sultans, they were also undergoing internal flux and change as a loosely defined social group that was seeking a higher status within local society, commensurate with its growing political clout. I focus on three works of this period, the *Raṇamallachanda* of Śrīdhara Vyāsa and the *Gaṅgadāsapratāpavilāsanāṭakam* and the *Māṇḍalikaṇṇpacarita* of poet Gaṅgādhara, to understand self-representations of the chieftains of the three regions of Idar, Champaner, and Saurashtra, which remained in conflict with the sultanate at Ahmedabad throughout the period of its domination.

The second courtly context that I consider here is that of the regional sultans themselves. This context is present throughout the dissertation in relation to the chieftains. However, I also focus specifically on a Sanskrit biography of Sultan Maḥmūd Begaḍā (1459-1511), one of the most influential rulers of the dynasty, under whom many of the chieftains were temporarily subjugated. Maḥmūd's rule also represents the high point of the sultanate, when, through its political and cultural strategies, it was able to integrate the diverse elements that made up the region. Maḥmūd's Sanskrit biography is entitled *Rājavinodamahākāvya* or the *Mahamūdasuratrāṇacaritra* and was composed by poet Udayarāja sometime between 1458 and 1469.

The third context of this study is less straightforward, as it involves the interaction between the colonial and the pre-colonial narrative traditions. In order to gain an understanding of the colonial representations of kingship in Gujarat, the text I analyse is the *Rās Mālā*, or the *Hindoo Annals of the Province of Goozerat in Western India*, written by Alexander Kinloch Forbes and first published in London in 1856. Forbes was an officer of the East India Company who served in

the Bombay Presidency in the mid-nineteenth century. Most of his years in office were spent in parts of 'Gujarat' and 'Kathiawar,' where he collected vast number of oral narratives and some written records related to the chieftains from the *bhāṭ* and *cāraṇ* genealogist-historians. Forbes used these oral and written narratives as the main source for his *Rās Mālā*, which focused primarily on the chieftains and their relationship with the regional sultans.¹⁵ Thus, I read the *Rās Mālā* keeping two historical contexts in mind; first, that of the administrator-scholar who served the colonial 'court' or rulers, and second, that of the *bhāṭ*s and *cāraṇ*s who served the needs of the royal houses. I show how the *Rās Mālā* is a product of an interaction between both these contexts.

The *bhāṭ*s and *cāraṇ*s were an integral part of the courts of the chieftains and 'local kings' throughout western India. Their status and position was derived from the fusion of both secular and religious qualities and duties. They played important roles in maintaining the social status and legitimacy of their overlords: they kept genealogical records, sang of their glory in war, and, until as late as the nineteenth century, they served as guarantors and diplomats for the royal houses on account of their sacred association with various forms of the mother goddess. In many cases, they were held in higher regard than the Brahmins, even though the *cāraṇ* caste (*jāti*) was ranked lower in the traditional *varṇa* hierarchy.¹⁶

¹⁵ A collection project such as the one conducted by Forbes in the nineteenth century, would be particularly difficult today as most communities of *bhāṭ*s and *cāraṇ*s have taken to other professions in wake of the dissolution of the princely states and memories of their oral accounts as well copies of written ones have not survived the test of time. Recently, however, attempts have been made at the Saurashtra University, Rajkot, to archive some of the records. The university has also introduced a diploma course on the traditional dialects used by the *bhāṭ*s and *cāraṇ*s.

¹⁶ Norman P. Ziegler, "Marwari Historical Chronicles," p. 226. Ziegler notes that this was the case because they did not have access to the *Vedas*.

The early history of the *bhāṭṣ* and *cāraṇ*s of Gujarat, however, remains somewhat obscure.¹⁷ While some of their records of their patrons' genealogies go as far back as the thirteenth century,¹⁸ we do not have much information about their own social origins. An early twentieth century Gazetteer on the population of region records a number of origin tales for the *bhāṭṣ*. One of these accounts states that they had originally been Brahmins who had migrated to Ahmedabad from Allahbad and Marwar.¹⁹ Other groups of *bhāṭṣ*, settled in Saurashtra and Kutch, also bear the title of 'Kanaujia,' further indicating a north Indian origin.²⁰ Another account claims that they were the offspring of a Kshatriya man and a Brahmin widow; yet another, attributes their origins to the sweat of Śiva's brow.²¹ The *cāraṇ*s on the other hand, are associated with a myth that claims they were created by Śiva to tend to certain animals and were of a very brave disposition.²² The *Ain-i-Akbari* also notes that they were known to recite hymns, genealogies, and stories of courage in order to inspire the soldiers to fight in a war.²³ A more recent study records that the *bhāṭṣ* were known for keeping the genealogical records of the Rajputs; the *cāraṇ*s were known as better fighters, those entrusted with the keys to forts, figuratively speaking, were referred to as *gaḍhvi* (derived from *gaḍh*

¹⁷ In 1994, Virbhadra Singhji recorded an account of a *cāraṇ* from Bhavnagar who claimed that it was only after the introduction of the Muslim rule in the region that they began to serve the Rajput chieftains. See Virabhadra Singhji, *The Rajputs of Saurashtra* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1994), p. 240.

¹⁸ A.M. Shah and R.G. Shroff, "The Vahīvancā Bāroṭs of Gujarat: A Caste of Genealogists and Mythographers," in Milton Singer ed., *Traditional India: Structure and Change* (Delhi: Rawat Publications, 1975), p. 48.

¹⁹ James Macnabb Campbell, ed., *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency. Gujarat Population: Hindus*, vol. 1 (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1901), p. 207.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., p. 214.

²³ Ibid.

or fort).²⁴ Thus, both castes appear to claim divine links and have a long association with the world of warriors. However, both these castes remain highly differentiated, defying traditional forms of caste classification.

The language they used for their composition was known as *cāraṇī* or *cāraṇī diṅgal*, sometimes also referred to as Old Gujarati or Old Western Rajasthani by modern scholars.²⁵ Further, the compositions, usually about local heroes, warriors, sages, benefactors, and lovers, were in unique metres which were meant for oral recitation and aimed at inspiring strong emotions among their audiences. Thus, they were instrumental in propagating a certain moral and martial ethos. Unlike the Sanskrit compositions of the Brahmin and Jain poets, these *cāraṇī* accounts were more accessible to the general population that lived in and around the forts of the local Rajput chieftains. Their oral tales also interacted closely with written works which shared the languages and genres of these compositions. Thus, as Norman Ziegler has pointed out, in Rajasthan, medieval literary genres like *khyāt*, *vāt*, *vārtā*, *hakikat*, *prastāv*, and *pidhi* (*vamasāvali*) drew their information and styles from the oral narratives that were widely in circulation.²⁶ In Gujarat, the *rās*, *pavāḍo*, and *phāgu* genres were similarly based on these oral traditions. Similarly, medieval narratives such as the *Raṇmallchanda* and the *Kanhaḍade Prabandha* (discussed in Chapter 2) composed by Brahmin poets also drew from the heroic oral tales of the region.²⁷ The relationship that these oral works shared with the

²⁴ Singhji, *The Rajputs*, p. 240. Also see Shah and Shroff, *Barots*, p. 46.

²⁵ For more details of the structure of this language, see L.P. Tessitori, "Notes on the Grammar of old Western Rajasthani with Special Reference to Apabhṛaca and to Gujarati and Marwari," *IA*, XLIII, XLIV, XLV (1914-1916).

²⁶ Ziegler, "Marwari Historical Chronicles," pp. 219-225.

²⁷ Chandrakant Mehta, "Madhyakālīnā Sahityaswarūpo (Literary Forms of the Medieval Period)," in

written literary narratives from the medieval period onwards was a complex and dialogic one.

In the nineteenth century, the colonial government invested heavily in the collection of historical and ethnographic data. In western India, influential administrators such as James Tod and Alexander Forbes, also found that it was the *bhāṭṣ* and *cāraṇs* who were the principal repositories of information about the ruling houses of Rajasthan and Gujarat.²⁸ They compared the tales of the traditional genealogist poets with the ballads of the bards of medieval Europe. Forbes wrote, "The bardic accounts, where they are written ... may rank with the contemporaneous ballad poetry of other nations."²⁹ While Forbes used a variety of literary materials in his history of Gujarat, the accounts of the 'bards' formed the primary source for his work and he regarded their accounts in their core as 'accurate.'³⁰ However, while following Tod, Forbes drew parallels between the poetry and the feudal society of Europe, he recognised that the social and ritual role played by the *bhāṭṣ* and *cāraṇs* were quite different from their western counterparts.

In this dissertation, I use 'juxtaposition' as an analytical strategy in order to contrast the representations of kingship in fifteenth-century Gujarat with its representations in the narratives of the *bhāṭṣ* and *cāraṇs* collected in the

Gujarātī Sāhitya Itihās (History of Gujarati Literature), Umashankar Joshi, Ananatarai Raval, and Yashvant Shukla, eds, vol. 2, part 1 (Ahmedabad: Gujarat Sahitya Parishad, 2001), pp. 58-59.

²⁸ Writing about "heroic poems as a sources for the history of India," Tod noted, "The poets are the chief, though not the sole, historians of Western India; neither is there a any deficiency of them, though they speak a peculiar tongue, which requires to be translated into the sober language of probability." James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han or the Central and Western States of Rajpoot India*, vol. 1. (New Delhi: Rupa and Co., 2005 [1829-1832]), p. xv.

²⁹ Forbes, *Rās Mālā*, pp. 265-266.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

nineteenth century. The long and complex history of the *bhāṭṣ* and *cāraṇs* links the colonial project with pre-colonial literary traditions, which in turn existed simultaneously and interactively with the Sanskrit works. These sources, therefore, allow us to capture non-elite voices which are simply not visible in the Sanskrit traditions. Further, the way Forbes represented the chieftains have influenced the manner in which their history has been perceived by generations of historians that followed. Contrasting these representations with those from the fifteenth century then allows us to conduct a complex comparative analysis of what the colonial officer chose to include and omit in his understanding of the period. The shift to the nineteenth century towards the end of this dissertation is thus an attempt to view regional kingship from the vantage point of two temporal moments.

Composed within these varying courtly contexts, the narratives studied here are full of the exaggerations and fabricated events that cannot always be corroborated with other contemporary sources. Any attempt at producing a positivist history and searching for the ‘facts’ through them would be doomed to failure. Instead, I focus on elements such as choice of language, tropes, and idioms in order to reflect on the motives, material desires, imaginary dreams, and social aspirations of those who ruled medieval Gujarat.

The Gujarati and Sanskrit narratives used here have not hitherto been translated, nor have they been used in any detail to reconstruct the history of the region. Similarly, while the *Rās Mālā* has been used as a source for the history medieval Gujarat, the literary and representative aspects of the text have not been examined. By locating these works within their specific historical contexts and

presenting close readings of them, this study makes an original contribution to the scholarly debates on kingship as well as to the history of Gujarat.

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND APPROACHES

As I have noted, the pre-colonial history of Gujarat remains a neglected area of research, despite the growing number of studies on regional traditions and the state's significance in India's contemporary politics. The available studies also represent a mixed bag of subjects, approaches, and sources. One of the first English-language histories of Gujarat, entitled *A History of Gujarat from the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (first published in 1894), by the Parsi scholar, Edalji Dosabhai, for instance, relies almost entirely on colonial sources, including Alexander Forbes's *Rās Mālā*, Grant Duff's *History of the Maharāttas*, the *Bombay gazetteers*, and translations of Persian works related to the region by English scholars.³¹ Several others followed in this tradition, as the earliest histories of the region by Indian scholars were inspired by colonial efforts at gathering historical information. Along with colonial writings, such works covered a vast temporal expanse, and perpetuated the periodisation of Gujarat's history into the three categories of 'Hindu,' 'Musalaman,' and 'British,' generally sharing the colonial suspicion of the Islamicate rulers. However, despite drawing extensively from colonial histories, they did not do so uncritically, and, towards the end of the nineteenth century, Gujarati intellectuals developed their own nationalistic agenda which found its way into their history writing. For many of them, trade

³¹ Edalji Dosabhai, *A History of Gujarat from the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1986 [1894]). A Gujarati edition of this work had been published a few years earlier, in 1860, by the Gujarat Vernacular Society as a school textbook. See Edalji Dosabhai, *Gujarātdeśno Itihās* (History of the Gujarat-country) (Ahmedabad: Gujarat Vernacular Society, 1860).

emerged as the primary ethos of Gujarat's history. Unlike the works of the British scholars, Gujarati historians of this period also did not necessarily view the Muslim sultanate as tyrannical and, in fact, saw the rulers as promoters of trade and prosperity.³²

Scholar-politician K.M. Munshi's (1887-1971) writings on Gujarat are another important component of the mixed bag of pre-colonial history. Munshi wrote extensively, both in Gujarati and English, on pre-sultanate Gujarat during the early-twentieth century. In these works, he presented the Caulukya and Vāghelā kings of Anhilvada Patan as great Hindu warrior heroes. In contrast, he saw the subsequent Islamic conquest as the reason for the dynasty's 'downfall.'³³ He primarily made use of Jain literary sources and some inscriptional materials patronised by the Anhilvada dynasties. He turned a blind eye to the cultural influence of the sultans and the Mughals, and emphasised that virtually no 'Hindu' or 'Sanskrit' literature was produced in these periods in the secular domain. Instead, according to Munshi, it was the *bhakti* poets of Gujarat that kept the Hindu traditions of the region alive during the crises that had compromised its past glory.³⁴ Similarly, his numerous and popular historical novels depicted individual Caulukya kings as the protectors of the region's Hindu heritage.³⁵ Traces of Munshi's representations of Gujarat's pre-colonial history are visible amongst

³² See Riho Isaka, "Gujarati Intellectuals and History Writing in the Colonial Period," *EPW*, 37, 48 (2002): 4867-4872. In this essay, Isaka examines a number of texts, including Dosabhai's, on the region's history from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, demonstrating how the region was created in the imagination of the elite Gujarati intellectuals.

³³ See for instance, K.M. Munshi, *The Glory that was Gūrjaradeśa*, vol. 1 (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1944).

³⁴ K.M. Munshi, *Gujarāta and its Literature from Early Times to 1852* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1954).

³⁵ Munshi's historical novels relating to the Caulukyas include *Gujarātno Nāth* (*Master of Gujarat*, 1917), *Prthvivallabh* (*Lord of the Earth*, 1920), *Rājādhirāja* (*King of Kings*, 1922), and *Jai Somnāth* (1940).

middle-class Gujaratis even today, many of whom subscribe to his views, often unaware of the existence and importance of Gujarat's diverse religious and political traditions.

Several other accounts of the region's history have also underscored the role of the Caulukyas as representing the 'glorious' past of Gujarat. *Gujarātno Madhyakālīna Rājput Itihās* (*The Medieval Rajput History of Gujarat*, first published during 1937-1939), for instance, viewed the Caulukya-Vāghelā dynasties as the great warrior rulers of the medieval period. Their reign, according to the book's author, Durgashankar Shastri, was one in which the region attained the height of its prosperity but in the centuries after 'Alā' al-Dīn Khaljī's attack, he notes, Gujarat saw the destruction of its "Hindu Empire" and along with that the destruction of its "Hindu culture and prosperity."³⁶ Similarly, A.K. Majumdar's *Chaulukyas of Gujarat* also granted this dynasty the pride of place in the region's medieval history. For him, the Caulukyas were the "virile captains of war,"³⁷ who saved the country from the disorder that followed the end of the Gūrajara-Pratīhāras and the Rāṣṭakūṭa empires of northern India.

While there has been a predilection for recovering Gujarat's medieval 'Hindu' past since the early years of the twentieth century, the sultanate, however, has not been entirely absent from this mixed bag of texts on Gujarat's pre-colonial history. Three works merit particular mention in this regard. The first volume of M.S. Commissariat's two-part history of the region, which begins from 'Alā' al-Dīn Khaljī's incursions (1298) and ends with Akbar's conquest (1572), lays a

³⁶ Durgashankar K. Shastri, *Gujarātno Madhyakālīna Rājput Itihās*, vol. 1 (Ahmedabad: Gujarat Vidyasabha, 1953 [1937-39]), p. 504.

³⁷ A.K. Majumdar, *Chaulukyas of Gujarat* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1956), p. 1.

considerable emphasis on the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The second volume focuses on Mughal Gujarat, until the establishment of the Maratha dominions in 1758. Writing in 1935, Commissariat had access to a wider variety of colonial accounts and translations than Dosabhai; his work, however, also incorporates details of its architectural history and inscriptions and their find spots into the account.³⁸ Although Commissariat's *A History of Gujarat* adopts a broadly dynastic approach, it remains the only available detailed political history of sultanate and Mughal Gujarat. The sultanate portion of the work, however, finds an important complement in S.C. Misra's study of the early centuries of Islamic rule over the region, published nearly three decades later in 1963.³⁹ Trained in the Aligarh tradition of history writing, Misra revisits the Persian sources on Gujarat, including some lesser-known ones, in order to analyse the processes by which the former nobles of the Delhi Sultanate established an independent kingdom. Finally, S.A.I. Tirmizi's essays in his *Some Aspects of Medieval Gujarat* form an important collection of research topics on the literary and cultural diversities that were an integral part of the region during sultanate and Mughal dominance.⁴⁰ Individual essays in this volume cover topics such as the region's medieval historiographical traditions, lives of prominent scholars as well as a physician from Gujarat, Islamic sectarian traditions, as well as a brief essay on the work of Udayarāja, the composer of the Sanskrit biography of Sultan Muḥmūd Begadā.

³⁸ See M.S. Commissariat, *A History of Gujarat; Including a Survey of its Chief Architectural Monuments and Inscriptions*, vol. 1 (Bombay: Longman, Green and Co., Ltd, 1938), vol. 2. (Bombay: Longman, Green and Co. Ltd., 1957).

³⁹ S.C. Misra, *The Rise of Muslim Power in Gujarat: A History of Gujarat from 1298 to 1442* (Bombay: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1982 [1963]).

⁴⁰ S.A.I. Tirmizi, *Some Aspects of Medieval Gujarat* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1968).

Despite their varying agendas and sources, the histories of pre-colonial Gujarat have broadly tended to be dynastic in their approach, failing to address how the changes in the different ruling regimes, in practice, affected the social, religious, and cultural aspects of the region. There is also a tendency in these to view the 'Caulukya-Vāghelā period' as being entirely distinct from the 'Sultanate period' that followed and to view the distinctions in religious terms. More recently, however, Samira Sheikh's doctoral thesis has integrated a variety of sources including Caulukya and sultanate period inscriptions, Gujarati, Persian, and Sanskrit accounts, caste histories, and literatures related to pilgrimage sites from the region. She uses these to trace the continuities in the political process that were at work in the region from the Caulukya (eleventh century) period until Sultan Maḥmūd Begadā's reign, which ended in 1511.⁴¹ Sheikh explores the role of migration and trade, that of the locally powerful lineages as well as the different religious sects that were operating in Gujarat, in the making of the region. She proposes the important thesis that there was not one, but several diverse elements that went into making the regional tradition of Gujarat, and that it was in fact the sultans who facilitated this process by providing a space in which these could all simultaneously exist.

My debt to Sheikh's understanding of the processes that went into the making of the Gujarat region will be obvious in the following pages. However, I do not approach the history of fifteenth-century Gujarat from the same 'social history' perspective. Instead, as I have noted, I take a more 'literary' approach to understand ideologies rather than social processes; the latter, however, form an important context for the present attempts at an intellectual history. The

⁴¹ Sheikh, *State and Society*.

narratives I drawn from, have, until now, only found passing mention in Gujarati and English language of surveys of Gujarati literature. By focusing on them, my work engages with the shortcomings of the wider historiography of the region, which has tended to view this period as one in which Indic forms of literature and culture were completely destroyed.

Studies on South Asian kingship form another important intellectual backdrop for this dissertation. A large literature now exists on the nature of the 'state' and 'state formation' in pre-colonial South Asia.⁴² A lengthy discussion of these works is beyond the scope of this introduction. However, among these more sociologically inclined studies, the ideas advanced by B.D. Chattopadhyaya on the formation of regional polities in early medieval India, prove particularly useful in understanding the political formations in Gujarat during the second millennium. This was, as I have noted, a period of transition and flux, but also a period of continuities. The subcontinent had witnessed the proliferation of dynasties from the early medieval period onwards and lineages such as the Gurjara-Pratihāras, the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, the Guhilas of Kiskindha, the Cālukyas of Veṅgi, Badāmi, and Kalyāṇi, or the Coḷas, came to be identified by their regional boundaries, centuries prior to the emergence of the Delhi Sultanate's successor states. In this regard, Chattopadhyaya has demonstrated that the proliferation of regional kingdoms, from the early medieval period onwards, can be viewed as a part of the larger process of regional and local state formation which was at work in the

⁴² Hermann Kulke's edited volume on the state in pre-colonial India is broadly representative of the debates that have been developing in the past five decades. See Hermann Kulke, ed., *The State in India, 1000-1700* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004 [1995]). Two other volumes should also be mentioned for their valuable contribution to the literature on Indian kingship. These are John F. Richards, ed., *Kingship and Authority in South Asia* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998) and Noboru Karashima, ed., *Kingship in Early Indian History* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1999).

subcontinent. He traces the beginning of this process to the period between the third and the sixth centuries of the Common Era, but more particularly to the period after the sixth century.⁴³ He identifies the expansion of state society through the process of local state formation, the peasantisation of tribes and caste formation, and appropriation and integration of local cults, as the three major interconnected processes that were at work through all the phases of Indian history.⁴⁴ Chattopadhyaya sees the formation of state societies as the major integrating factor in the development of regional political, economic, and socio-cultural trends. His work focuses on north India between c. 700 and 1200. Consequently, he does not address the contribution of the Islamic states to this process, underscoring, instead, the role of the Brahminical, and, more particularly, the Rajput ruling lineages. The significance of this articulation lies in the fact that it has provided an alternative approach to the study of the period between the end of the Guptas and the beginning of the Delhi Sultanate, which has, until recently, been viewed as a period of crisis and decentralisation. Another implication of Chattopadhyaya's observations, particularly relevant for our purposes, is the fact that apart from the larger regional states like Gujarat, Malwa, and the Deccan, which began to take shape during the reign of the Delhi Sultans, a large number of local and sub-regional states continued to exist and emerge.⁴⁵ The vast substratum

⁴³ Chattopadhyaya, "Introduction" to *Making*, p. 17.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Hermann Kulke and others have also made similar observations about continuities in state formation in Orissa, particularly through the process of cult assimilation. Ancharlotte Eschmann, Hermann Kulke, and G. Tripathi, eds, *The Cult of Jugannatha and the Regional Tradition of Orissa* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1978). B.D. Chattopadhyaya's suggestions are further born out in Nandini Sinha-Kapur's study of state formation in the Guhila kingdom of Mewar. After the decline of the Delhi Sultanate, Mewar also emerged as a significant regional kingdom. See Nandini Sinha-Kapur, *State Formation in Rajasthan: Mewar During the Seventh - Fifteenth Centuries* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2002).

of chieftains that continued to exist in Gujarat during the rule of the regional sultans and the governments that followed are an example of this process.

Continuities in the political formations implied continuities in the ideological realm as well. For instance, from around the ninth century onwards, as several smaller regional lineages came to acquire political power, and in some cases become independent kings, they made grants of land to Brahmins. The legal sanctions of these grants were often accompanied by a genealogy of the patron king. In these genealogies, we find a number of these recent ruling dynasties making claims to a full-fledged 'Kshatriya' status on the basis of a connection with the ancient royal families of the *sūrya vaṃśa* (solar lineage) and *candra vaṃśa* (lunar lineage). As many of these dynasties were of unknown descent and may have once been categorised as *mlecchas*, or those located on the margins of *varṇa* society, this fabricated claim obscured their origins and granted them a legitimate position as kings.⁴⁶ These claims were accompanied by the image of the king as an idealised warrior, performing royal rituals, and protecting Brahmins, cows, and vassals. These men also took on universally recognised titles such as *mahārāja* (great king), *mahārājādhirāja* (great king among kings), and *cakravartin* (ruler of the world) which established their imperial authority and social position. Such claims over the *varṇa* category of the 'Kshatriya,' continued to serve a variety of validating

⁴⁶ Romila Thapar has shown how the idea of the 'barbarian' or '*mleccha*' came to change over several centuries in early and medieval Indian history and how many of these groups came to acquire the more respectable *varṇa* titles of Kshatriya and Rajput. See her "The Image of the Barbarian in Early India," in *Cultural Pasts: Essays in Early Indian History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 235-270.

functions in the wake of the transformations that were taking place in the subcontinent from c. 1000 onwards.⁴⁷

The body of texts discussed in this dissertation interacts closely with this process of adopting a 'Kshatriya' status that was visible in many parts of northern India. While many of the chieftains of Gujarat made claims to the prestigious solar and lunar lineages, in this period they also sought links with already well-known warrior heroes of the region. The dynasty of Gujarati sultans, as I will discuss in the following pages, also chose to associate themselves with similar Kshatriya links, as they were known to have been descendents of the Tāñk Rajputs from northwestern India who had converted to Islam. Thus both Indic and Islamicate rulers alike drew upon the category and its ideological accoutrements, indicating that major changes in the political domain may not have led to a corresponding change in the symbolic one. The category of the idealised 'Kshatriya' king was a complex one, in which traditional meanings could be both reinforced and subverted.

Forging links with this prestigious and universally recognised category of kingship was made possible through the patronage of public inscriptions, particularly, the eulogistic praise poem or *praśasti* form and often also through the patronage of courtly panegyrics in the different genres available at the time. Thus, as Sheldon Pollock has convincingly demonstrated, there emerged a 'mutually constitutive' relationship between *kāvya* or literary culture and *rājya* or kingship and political

⁴⁷ As Surjit Sinha has demonstrated, the category of Kshatriya along with the related category of 'Rajput' remained an important means of social mobility in more contemporary times as well. See Surjit Sinha, "State Formation and Rajput Myth in Tribal Central India," in Kulke, *State*, pp. 304-342.

power.⁴⁸ According to Pollock, from the early centuries of the common era until the end of the first millennium, it was the cosmopolitan languages, primarily Sanskrit, but also Prakrit and Apabhramsha that were chosen as the “fit vehicles for literary expression.”⁴⁹ These languages were afforded royal patronage, not only all over the Indian subcontinent but also in parts of Southeast Asia. From c. 1000, however, this position was to be occupied by the regional vernaculars. The rise of the vernaculars mirrored that of Sanskrit and these newly emergent languages of power drew their prestige, according to Pollock, from their cosmopolitan predecessor.⁵⁰ More generally, Pollock views the literary languages, both cosmopolitan and vernacular, as having the ability to grant their patrons fame and symbolic authority in the territorial domain of their choice. Inscriptions and courtly narratives were usually produced on the behest of the king or his officials, and are, therefore, the closest examples of self-representation that can possibly be found.⁵¹

Pollock’s analysis of the relationship between language and power is central to the arguments presented in this dissertation. However, my findings from fifteenth-century Gujarat do not always neatly fit into the division of labour that he accords to the cosmopolitan and vernacular languages. Further, Pollock completely rejects the notion that inscriptions were written to legitimate political power. He finds the idea that “elites in command of new forms of social power are

⁴⁸ Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Literature, and Power in Premodern India* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2006), p. 18.

Also see “India in the Vernacular Millennium: Literary Culture and Polity, 1000-1500,” *Daedalus* 127, 3 (1998): 41-74 and “The Cosmopolitan Vernacular,” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 57, 1 (1998): 6-37.

⁴⁹ Pollock, *Language*, p. 99.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 395-397.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

understood to have deployed the mystifying codes and symbols of Sanskrit to secure popular consent,” not only “anachronistic” but also “culturally homogenizing,” and “theoretically naive.”⁵² From the historical experience of premodernity, this would imply that the people who received these ideas were being somehow deceived into believing in “ideas that were opposed to their interests that rulers believed to be such.”⁵³ Similarly, in this period, kingship was a familiar and continuously given concept and hence no “standard for comparison existed for doubting the inevitability of kingship.”⁵⁴ However, given the fact that the literary language was reinforcing the king’s fame and virtuosity, it appears that it may indeed have been, among other things, playing some kind of validating role.

Implicit in the relationship between textual production and political power is the role of the composer, chronicler, or poet, who is the creator of the royal eulogy. The poet-composers of these narratives played a central part in the creation of this self-image of kings and those associated with his realm. Sanskrit poets travelled to different courts and served the rulers with the cosmopolitan linguistic devices that were available to them. Similarly, some like the Telugu poet, Śrīnātha, travelled across the Andhra region, as it was not only the Vijayanagara king, Harihara II, who sought his services, but also the ambitious elites of the region, who wished secure their social position by emulating the current courtly trends.⁵⁵ Thus, it was through the agency of the poet that the historical world of

⁵² Ibid., p. 18.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 522.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ See Velcheru Narayana Rao and David Shulman, *Classical Telugu Poetry: An Anthology*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 118.

the patrons was internalised in the text and its meaning fixed. In Gujarat, social and political validation also appears to have come, as noted above, from the oral traditions of the *bhāṭs* and *cāraṇs*.

Further, in the case of second-millennium Gujarat, the transformation to the vernacular does not appear to have been as straightforward as Pollock has suggested for other parts of the subcontinent. More significantly, Sanskrit, as this dissertation will demonstrate, continued to hold a position of power and in turn facilitated the configuration of kingly authority by drawing on pre-existing models despite the rise of an Islamicate power in the region.

In my reading of *Rās Mālā*, I similarly emphasise the close relationship between political power and the production of texts. In the past few decades, Nicholas Dirks's work on the kingdom of Pudukottai has provided an important point of departure for scholars who have approached the question of the continuities of pre-colonial kingship, its ritual, practical, and symbolic aspects, in the colonial period.⁵⁶ While Dirks argued that colonial rule rendered the ritual aspects of indigenous kingship empty of the power they once commanded, scholars like Norbert Peabody have demonstrated how the power of the king in pre-colonial India was never devoid of internal tensions and was, in fact, transformed and re-configured even prior to the colonial encounter in the nineteenth century.⁵⁷ While these studies focus on the 'practical' aspects of the colonial interaction with indigenous forms of political power, my interest, as in the case of the fifteenth century narratives, lies in the manner in which Forbes

⁵⁶ Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993 [1987]).

⁵⁷ Norbert Peabody, *Hindu Kingship and Polity in Precolonial India* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

represented the chieftains and rulers of Gujarat in his work. In the process, Forbes himself occupies the place of a 'chronicler' serving the political needs of the British Empire.

Related to the discussion on the adoption of the 'Kshatriya' *varṇa* and the idealised norms of universal kingship is the literature on the process known as 'Rajputisation.' This term refers to the process that took place in the region comprising Sindh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and central India, where many groups appear to have taken on the *jāti* status of 'Rajput'. When colonial officers such as James Tod and Alexander Forbes came to the region in the nineteenth century, they styled the chieftains that dotted the land in this term, which, in its most basic form, represented a brave and chivalrous warrior or warrior king. These administrators often used the terms 'Rajput' and 'Kshatriya' interchangeably, perhaps because they found the chieftains they interacted with doing the same. The two categories certainly seemed to have shared features, including an emphasis on descent, particularly from the solar and lunar dynasties, fabricated linkages with the mythical 'thirty-six' royal clans, as well as martial qualities including a preference for death over dishonour. In a sense, both categories were also open-ended because they were able to incorporate groups of unknown descent. Why then, we might ask, do the categories exist separately? What, if any, are the differences between them?

In recent studies on the category of the 'Rajput,' we can see two major stands of argument. The first of these, proposed by B.D. Chattopadhyaya's extensive studies of inscriptions from early-medieval Rajasthan, suggests that the terms such as *rājaputra* or *rāuta* used in these are an indication of the emergence of Rajputs as early as this period. Chattopadhyaya relates this to the ongoing

processes of regional and local state formation, and suggests the groups that claimed Rajput status came to form sub-clans claiming affinity with the major clans of Rajasthan. The sub-clans were not necessarily formed due to the segmentation of major clans, but due to the absorption of new clans as junior or minor branches of these.⁵⁸ Alliances, particularly through marriage, came to be a major tool for this absorption as these were supposed to have been conducted only between those groups that had come to constitute the Rajput category. These alliances served the twin functions of granting legitimacy to groups like the Hunas, who had acquired substantial political power, as well as establishing a strong network of political relations between the Rajputs themselves.⁵⁹ Thus, the Rajput political structure, according to Chattopadhyaya, was clan-based from the early-medieval period onwards.

On the other hand, scholars such as Normal Ziegler, Dirk Kolff, and Masahiko Mita have found that such a clan-based system, in fact, developed among Rajputs somewhat later during Mughal rule.⁶⁰ For instance, Mita, in his examination of inscriptions of the Nāḍol Cāhamānas of southern Rajasthan from the twelfth century, finds that their political and land distribution system gave centrality to 'royal kinsman,' rather than to members of the clan who shared a common descent from an illustrious ancestor. The latter was the feature of the *bhāi-bandh* system of the later kingdoms of Rajasthan (and parts of Gujarat), where

⁵⁸ Chattopadhyaya, *Making*, p. 51.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

⁶⁰ See Ziegler, "Marwari Chronicles" and "Some Notes on Rājput Loyalties During the Mughal Period," in Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, eds, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003 [1998]), pp. 168-210; Dirk H. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan, 1450-1850* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Masahiko Mita, "Polity and Kingship of Early Medieval Rajasthan: An Analysis of the Nadol Cāhmāna Inscriptions," in Karashima ed., *Kingship in Indian History*, pp. 89-117.

many small principalities were ruled by members of the same clan, who jointly entered military campaigns and distributed land among themselves.⁶¹

However, the category of 'Rajput' also appears to have had the other, more fluid meaning of a 'mercenary warrior'. As Dirk Kolff's work on the military labour market in pre-Mughal Hindustan suggests, in north Indian ethnohistory we can see "a continuum between at one end, mainly in Rajasthan, a genealogically defined Rajput aristocracy and a centre and opposite end occupied by a variety of peasant groups and tribal elites, largely in Hindustan (by which he means north and central India), whose values and behaviour kept alive a more ancient layer of Rajpoothood."⁶² For these men, the later traditions of Rajput orthodoxy, such as an established genealogy and linkages with a Puranic past, were less significant than their power to broker alliances and control the supply of military men. The emphasis on descent that came to define a legitimate 'Rajput' status, what Kolff calls the 'Rajput Great Tradition,' was a product of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. From the vantage point of this tradition, the earlier forms of 'Rajpoothood' appeared 'spurious' and were confirmed as being such in the literary productions of the Brahmins and bards. To these 'spurious' Rajputs, whose social status was open-ended, what mattered were sepoys and terms of service rather than sultans and states.

In examining the texts in this dissertation, I have found both these formulations useful. This is because the rulers and chieftains, at least in Gujarat in the fifteenth century, were undergoing transformations at various levels and were therefore drawing on a variety of ideological resources, and not all at the same

⁶¹ Mita, "Polity," p. 103

⁶² Kolff, *Naukar*, p. 73.

time. Thus, while in the Sanskrit texts we find poets drawing on pre-existing models of Kshatriya-hood, in the Old Gujarati and *cāraṇi* accounts, these men are represented in terms of the more fluid category of the 'Rajput' warrior. While some may have been able to acquire considerable land and establish their sovereignty, several others may have served as loyal warriors in the armies of more influential chieftains or even the sultans. Such men also formed an important part of the tradition of oral accounts, memorial hero-stones, and in what went into the making of the 'Rajput ethos', whose keystones were loyalty to one's master, valour, and chivalry.⁶³ Keeping this multiplicity in mind in my approach to the courtly narratives from Gujarat, I refer to the chieftains in the terms that are used by the authors of the texts themselves rather than interpolating titles and terms from other contexts or time periods.

Further, in attempting to understand the nature of kingship among the chieftains of Gujarat, I have benefited from approaches taken by scholars of medieval South India. While studies on the fifteenth century are rare even for this otherwise well-documented region, V.N. Rao, David Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahminyam's work on Nāyaka kingdoms from the late sixteenth century Tamilnadu provides a useful framework by which literary texts can be used to understand warrior chieftains' social and political aspirations.⁶⁴ The authors show these immigrant lineages of Shudra descent were able to gain political ascendancy after the decline of the Vijayanagara kingdom. Using literary narratives produced in the Nāyaka courts, they demonstrate how these reassimilated traditional forms

⁶³ See the story of Jugdev Parmar and the Waghela brothers in Chapter 5, for instance.

⁶⁴ Rao et al., *Symbols*. Another important articulation in this regard can be found in Sanjay Subrahmanyam and David Shulman, "The Men Who Would be King? The Politics of Expansion in Early Seventeenth-century Northern Tamilnadu," *MAS*, 24, 2 (1999): 225-248.

of the Brahmin-Kshatriya hierarchy as well as the symbols of kingship into a new, and regional idiom that authenticated their rule. While the structure of Rajput society was somewhat different from that of the Nāyakas, parallels can be found in the manner in which unpedigreed men might have drawn on and refashioned “non-ascriptive, heroic criteria,”⁶⁵ classical codes of kingship, and concocted family histories in fashioning their newly acquired political power.

PLAN OF CHAPTERS

In order to understand the dialogical aspects of the textual representation of kingship in fifteenth-century Gujarat, this dissertation begins with a study of the ideological discourses that preceded them. In the first chapter, I focus on the rule of the Caulukyas and Vāghelās (c. 941-1304), the major dynasties to have dominated the region from their central mainland capital of Anhilvada Patan. Originally descendents of the Cāvaḍā forest kings, who had established the city Anhilvada sometime in the eighth century, the Caulukyas (also known as Solankis) became politically influential in the region.

Hundreds of inscriptions (primarily in Sanskrit) found all over the region as well as a variety of literary narratives composed during the Caulukya reign (and also of their successors, the Vāghelās) bear witness to the existence of a widespread and complex administrative network. These also reflect composite ideology of rule that drew on elements from Puranic ideals as well as the Jainism. This first chapter examines certain representative inscriptions and texts from the Caulukya-Vāghelā period as the background to the study. It focuses on the Caulukya-Vāghelā political context and the rhetoric of kingship, which was re-

⁶⁵ Rao et al., *Symbols*, p. 7.

configured rather than destroyed with the establishment of sultanate rule in the fifteenth century.

The story of Raṇmall, discussed in the second chapter, presents a contrast to the ideologies of the Caulukya-Vāghelā kings who had met their end at 'Alā' al-Dīn Khaljī's hands in 1298. In Śrīdhara Vyāsa's narrative, Raṇmall's battle against the new governor sent by the Delhi Sultan was supported neither by an elaborate court nor a long genealogy. Instead, Raṇmall is a solitary hero concerned with the defense of his patrimonies and honour. His story has the fluid quality of an oral narrative and, interestingly, is composed by a Brahmin poet in a popular regional language interspersed with several Persian words. It is also laden with stock descriptions of a Kshatriya warrior's duty to protect Brahmins, women, and cows against the atrocities of the Muslims. This mix of authorship, language, and tropes, I suggest, reflects the crystallising self-representation of chieftains, such as Raṇmall, who appear to at once be seeking a place in the larger *varṇa* hierarchy and retaining more fluid warrior traditions in this period.

In the Sanskrit narratives patronised later by chieftains, who held similar hill kingdoms as Raṇmall, we find resonances of the cosmopolitan order that existed during the Caulukya rule. Here, in the Cauhāṇ and Cūḍāsamā kingdoms of Champaner and Junagadh respectively, there existed elaborate courts, courtiers, and genealogies that proclaimed links with prestigious Puranic heroes. Above all, their rulers saw themselves as repositories of all the virtues demanded of true Kshatriya kings. Yet, their political aspirations remained local to the areas that they controlled. Their genealogies also did not draw upon the Caulukya-Vāghelās for their legitimacy, but reconfigured the older literary articulations of kingship. In the wake of the social and political flux that groups such as these were undergoing, I argue that despite their violent battles with the enemy *yavana*

(Muslim) kings depicted in the narratives, these men aspired for the establishment of control and fame over their own local territories rather than the entire region. The use of the cosmopolitan Sanskrit and the aestheticised *kāvya* genre, established their patrons' rule firmly within the region rather than carrying its fame across the subcontinent.

Maḥmūd Begaḍā's biography by Udayarāja, a poet who appears to have served at his court for a few years in the mid-fifteenth century, provides another example of how a Sanskrit narrative could be harnessed to validate the rule of an Islamicate king's regional rule. Maḥmūd's reign has been viewed as one in which the regional sultanate had reached its apogee but, as the proliferation of inscriptions demonstrates, even in the decades that preceded it the sultan's authority had been recognised all over the region. Udayarāja's panegyric to the sultan, however, goes a step further than the inscriptions that use Sanskritised titles for him (and his predecessors) and in fact links him to Rāma as well as a variety of other Indic epic heroes. Thus, I suggest that in Udayarāja's depiction of the sultan as a Kshatriya king, we once again witness a reconfiguring of the familiar articulations of kingship.

In the final chapter, I shift my focus to Alexander Forbes's *Rās Mālā* and its representations of the chieftains of Gujarat under sultanate rule. I juxtapose Forbes's narrative with the fifteenth century narratives in order to present the contrasts and continuities between them. I show that Forbes's depiction of kingship in the fifteenth century reflects a more fluid warrior ethos that is also visible in the story of Raṇmall. This interpretation, I suggest, was the result of his interaction with the traditional genealogist poets, the *bhāṭs* and *cāraṇs*, and the Brahmin, Dalpatram Dahyabhai who acted as the chief interlocutor between them and the colonial officer. However, I also argue that Forbes's project served the needs of colonial power in the manner in which he represented these Rajput

chieftains as the original and most legitimate rulers of the region prior to the arrival of the British.

Chapter 1

Kingship in Early Medieval Gujarat

The contemporary western Indian state of Gujarat is a peninsular region extending into the Arabian Sea, between the gulfs of Cambay and Kutch. Although the geographical space that is encompassed by the boundaries of the modern state has had a very long history of settlement, Gujarat has not always been a coherent region. Traditionally, the region was divided into four broad divisions, namely Saurashtra or *Saurāṣṭra* (Sorath in Prakrit and Gujarati) or Kathiawar; the north and north-eastern parts, flanked by the Vindhya-Aravalli hills known as *Ānarta* (often referred to as 'Gujarat' within the region in modern times); southern Gujarat known as *Lāṭa* (now referred to as Dakshin or South Gujarat); and Kutch in the west. Politically, the different regions have had a long history of interaction with one another, with mainland rulers trying to establish complete control over Saurashtra and Kutch, both of which were important from the point of view of trade and revenues.

These traditional divisions also constituted different ecological zones. For instance, the long coastline for centuries facilitated the migration and settlement of people from all over the world such as the Greeks, Parthians, Scythians, Arabs, Turks, Persians, and the Portuguese, who came here to trade. Thus it was also a significant part of the Indian Ocean trade network. In addition to the open coast, the fertile hills and plains of Saurashtra attracted pastoralist groups like the *Cūḍāsamās* and *Kāthis*, who entered the region from the north-west. This inflow of migrants of varying origins also led to ancient 'Saurāṣṭra' being mentioned in Dharmaśāstric literature as the impure land of *mlecchas* or outcastes, to be visited

only for the sake of pilgrimage,¹ as it was home to number of holy sites such as Somanatha and Dwaraka. From the early medieval period onwards, Saurashtra and its principal city of Junagadh were also associated with the Cuḍāsamā Rajputs, who had migrated to the region from Sindh and who remained in constant conflict with the mainland rulers.²

The region of Kutch, which lies between the Saurashtra peninsula and the area of Sindh, holds a somewhat isolated geographical position due to the vast stretches of the Rann on its north and east, the Gulf of Kutch to the south and the Arabian Sea on the west. Kutch has also had a long history of pastoralist migrations, particularly descendents of the Sammā Rajputs of Sindh. Its geographic location has contributed to its distinctiveness as a region, its language and people not always associating themselves with mainland Gujarat.³

Further, the north and the east is circumscribed by the highland regions of Palanpur, Mahikantha, Panchmahals, and Rewakantha, which separate Gujarat from Rajasthan and central India. Yet, the trade routes through their hinterlands

¹ M.R. Majmudar, *Cultural History of Gujarat* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1965), p. xiv.

² The Cūḍāsamās and Jāḍejās, who shared their descent from the Sammās of Sindh, dominated the princely houses of the Kathiawar region until they were dissolved in the post-independence era. Anthropologist Harald Tambs-Lyche has demonstrated that the conflict between the Rajput and mercantile ethos of the Saurashtra/Kathiawar region continues to dominate its political landscape and distinguish it from the mainland even today. See Harald Tambs-Lyche, *Power, Profit and Poetry: Traditional Society in Kathiawar, Western India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1997).

³ One of the earliest gazetteers of the region notes: "From its isolated position, the special character of its people, their peculiar dialect, and their strong feeling of personal loyalty to their ruler, the peninsula of Cutch has more of the elements of a distinct nationality than any other dependencies of the Bombay Government." James Macnabb Campbell, *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, vol. V (Cutch, Pálanpur, and Mahi Kántha) (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1880), p. 1. This distinctiveness is also visible in the politics of the region today. For instance, the post 2001 earthquake reconstruction projects have highlighted its inhabitants' discontent with the historical dominance and hegemony of the 'Gujarati'-speaking mainland. See Simpson, "'Gujarat' Earthquake" and "The State of Play Six Years After the Gujarat Earthquake," *EPW*, 42, 11 (2007): 932-937.

connected Gujarat and the western sea-coast with the interiors of India.⁴ Thus, hilly tracts like Junagadh, Girnar, Satrunjaya in the Saurashtra peninsula and Champaner, and Idar in the north-east not only emerged as important pilgrimage centres but also as strategic locations for the construction of fortifications by local chieftains and powerful Sultans who sought to protect the valuable trade routes.

The northern frontiers had also connected Gujarat to the wider Islamic world. Migrations of traders and pastoralists had brought Islam to the region soon after its inception, but Gujarat also became connected with the lands to the west of the Indus following Muḥammad bin Qāsim's conquest of Sindh in the eighth century and later with the raids of Maḥmūd of Ghazna (d. 1030) and the Ghurid Sultan Mu'izz al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Sām (d. 1206).⁵ However, it was only when Karaṇadeva, the last Vāghelā ruler was defeated by 'Alā' al-Dīn Khaljī in 1298 that the region's political fortunes were linked more enduringly to the trans-regional empire of the Delhi Sultanate and thus with the wider Persianate world. This connection was eventually to result in making Gujarat one of the most powerful of the regional kingdoms of the second millennium prior to the rise of the Mughal Empire in the sixteenth century.

The rule of the Caulukyas (also referred to as the Solankis) and their successors, the Vāghelās lies at the threshold of the changes that were to follow with the new political system; while it represents an older political order that

⁴ V.K. Jain, *Trade and Traders*, pp. 12-13.

⁵ For a comprehensive history of the Ghaznavid and Ghurid conquests of India, see Jackson, *Delhi Sultanate* and Wink, *Al-Hind*, vol. 1. For a list of campaigns, see John F. Richards, "The Islamic Frontier in the East: Expansion into South Asia," *South Asia* 4 (1974): 94-98 (also cited in Jackson, *Delhi Sultanate*, fn. 5, p. 6).

prevailed in India in the early medieval period, the establishment of the governors of the Delhi Sultanate and within a century, the independent Sultanate, did not lead to the complete destruction of the symbols and ideologies of that order. These symbols and ideologies, which were drawn from the then prevalent literary and mythological domains, were often rearticulated to suit the new and changing political situations, as some of the chapters that follow will demonstrate. The present chapter, however, focuses on the representations of kingship and authority during the reign of the Caulukya and Vāghelā kings, who ruled over large parts of Gujarat from their mainland capital of Anhilvada Patan from c. 941 to 1298 (1304), in order to provide a background to the changes that were to follow in the later fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. The chapter discusses three themes related to Caulukya-Vāghelā kingship, primarily based on their inscriptional records. These include, first, the choice of the Sanskrit language in the Caulukya-Vāghelā records. This, as Sheldon Pollock has discussed, was closely related to the kings' assertion of power during this period; second, the rhetoric of Caulukya kingship and the specific terminology used to describe their kings and political intermediaries; and lastly, the representations of territories and political geographies that underpinned the Caulukya-Vāghelā notions of kingship. I begin, however, with a very brief survey of the political history of the Caulukya-Vāghelā rulers of Anhilvada in order to give a sense of the context in which kingship and its literary representations were produced and elaborated.

BUILDING A KINGDOM

Sometime in the mid-tenth century CE, Mūlarāja, a scion of the Caulukya family, killed his maternal uncle, Cāvaḍa Sāmantasimha and established his reign over the

city of Anhilvada. The city of Anhilvada Patan had been founded nearly two centuries earlier by Vanrāja Cāvaḍa, who had broken away from the lands originally held by his family at Panchasar, in western Gujarat. However, the establishment of the Caulukya rule over the city marks the beginning of a period in which Gujarat experienced a number of transformations that eventually formed the background against which the Gujarati Sultans were able to lay the foundations of their kingdom.

The *Prabandhacintāmaṇi* (Wishing-stone of Chronicles) by the fourteenth century Jain monk, ācārya Merutuṅga speaks of early Cāvaḍā rulers (c. 720-956) as being forest-dwelling thieves or bandits (*caura*) prior to the establishment of their rule over Anhilvada. Vanrāja (lit. forest king), the founder of the city, lived in the forest with his uncle, a former general of the kings of Panchasar and functioned as a bandit.⁶ On one occasion, a deputation from the Kānyakubja king came to collect a tribute from the ruler of Gurjaradeśa (Gurjara-country, Gujarat), a land that the former had given to his daughter as part of her marriage. In order to carry out this collection, the deputation appointed Vanrāja as their leader. In six months time he managed to collect a considerable sum of money and horses. When the deputation proceeded to return with these resources, he intercepted their journey, killed them and secured the wealth and horses for himself. Then, he went on to look for a heroic land (*śūrām bhūmi*) for a city in which he could be crowned king.⁷ He also

⁶ Merutungacharya, *Prabandhacintāmaṇi*, Durgāshanker Kevalram Shāstri, ed., (Bombay: Forbes Gujarati Sabha, 1932), pp. 18-20. The *Ratnamāla*, composed by the twelfth century Vaiṣṇava Brahmin poet, Kṛṣṇajī, also mentions a similar story about the establishment of the city and the life of Vanrāja. See Kṛṣṇajī, *The Ratan Mālā*. Alexander Kinloch Forbes, trans. (Bombay: Reprinted from the Bombay Branch Royal Asiatic Society's Journal, 1868).

⁷ Merutungacharya, *Prabandhacintāmaṇi*, p. 20. The text uses the phrase “*nijarajyābhīṣekāya*” or “for (the purpose of) his own coronation.”

went on to recruit a chief minister and commander for his army, thus acquiring all the initial accoutrements of kingship. It was thus that the kingdom of Anhilvada Patan was established through the resources of a forest bandit. It was only a few generations later that Mūlarāja expanded the territory acquired by Vanrāja, invited Brahmins to settle in his lands, issued inscriptions in Sanskrit and established the foundations of a full-fledged kingdom.

The Caulukyas have widely been associated with the end of Gurjara-Pratihāras of Kānyakubja, who held sway over most of north India until the end of the tenth century, their dominance gradually waning by the tenth century. Following the decline of this power and its rival kingdom, the Rāṣṭrakūṭas in the Deccan, several smaller dynasties such as the Paramāras, Cāndellas, Kālācuri, Caulukyas, Gāhaḍavāla came to control different parts of northern India. This proliferation of dynasties, as B.D. Chattopadhyaya has asserted, was related to the continuing process of state formation at the regional and local level, which in turn was interconnected with the growth of trade and urban centres from the early medieval period onwards.⁸ Caulukya rule in Gujarat was a part of these developments.

After Mūlarāja's accession (c. 942-996), the Caulukyas gradually established their reign in different parts of Gujarat with Anhilvada Patan as the centre. During the reign of his son, Cāmunḍarāja (c. 996-1009) and grandson Durlabharāja (c. 1009-1022), further expansion and settlement took place into Lāṭa, in the southern part of the region.⁹ While the latter's successor, Bhīma (c. 1022-1064), was engaged

⁸ See Introduction to this dissertation. Also, B.D. Chattopadhyaya, "Urban Centres in Early Medieval India: An Overview," in his *Making*, pp. 155-182 and "Political Processes and the Structure of Polity in Early Medieval India," in *ibid.*, pp. 183-222.

⁹ Majumdar, *CG*, pp. 34-42.

in battles with Maḥmūd of Ghazna as well as with Sindh and Malwa during the course of his reign, his son Karṇa (c. 1064-1094) is attributed with subjugating the Bhils who occupied the lands between the Rann of Kutch and the river Sabarmati. However, Jayasimha Siddharāja (c. 1094-1143), who succeeded Karṇa and is one of the most acclaimed rulers of the dynasty, defeated Rā Khengāra or Navghaṇa of Girnar and reduced the Cāhamānas of Naḍula and Śākambharī to a feudatory status.¹⁰ He also conquered parts of Malwa and defeated the Paramāras of Bhinmal as well as a certain 'Bārbāraka', who has variously (and somewhat tenuously) been identified as belonging to either the Koli, Bhil, or Mer tribes. Siddharāja's successful campaigns increased the size of his territory and the Caulukya kingdom attained its maximum extent during his reign including Saurashtra, southern Rajputana, the Sambhar and parts of Malwa.¹¹

Kumārapāla (c. 1143-1174) followed Siddharāja as the next most prominent Caulukya ruler. His territories extended to the Vindhya ranges at least as far as the river Tapti in the south and parts of southern Rajasthan in the north. Saurashtra and Kutch in the west were also a part of his domains. While very little is known about his successor, Ajayapāla, Mūlarāja II, who succeeded him in 1176 CE, has gained a place of prominence in the writings of contemporary chroniclers as

¹⁰ For an account of Cāhamānas of Naḍula as feudatories of the Caulukyas see Mita, "Polity and Kingship."

¹¹ Majumdar, *CG*, p. 82-83. Inscriptions attributed to Siddharāja, or bearing his name, have been found in several parts of the region, including Udaipur, Sambar, and Ujjain. The Dohad inscription of 1140 also speaks of Siddharāja Jayasimha as the ruler of *Gurjara-maṇḍala* and notes that he imprisoned the kings of Saurashtra and Malwa. See *IA*, X, p. 159. Also cited in Majumdar, *Cultural History*, p. 18.

having resisted an attack by Mu'izz al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Sām, also known as Hammīra (Amira) and the lord of the *turuṣkas* or *mlecchas*.¹²

With the reign of Bhima II (c. 1179-1242), which followed the brief rule of his brother, Mūlarāja II (c. 1176-1178/9), Caulukya power in Gujarat saw the beginnings of internal strife and external chaos that eventually led to the passing over of the Anhilvada territories to the Vāghelās, who had formerly been their courtiers or *sāmantas*.¹³ The Vāghelās continued to rule in the region by claiming descent from the Caulukyas but were able to retain only nominal control over parts of Saurashtra and north Gujarat. With the conquest of Gujarat by 'Alā' al-Dīn Khalji's army, this family also lost its control over central Gujarat, although branches of it continued to exist in north Gujarat and central India.¹⁴ However, with the establishment of the Caulukya power from the latter half of the tenth century, a strip of territory extending from north to south, roughly from the area north of Patan to Cambay on the coast, became the core territory from where Gujarat was ruled in the subsequent centuries.¹⁵

As Samira Sheikh has demonstrated, in the period beginning from the eleventh century onwards, there was a continuous expansion of settlement and trade continued to flourish through the different political changes.¹⁶ As they expanded their territories, the Caulukyas also built towns and settlements along the important trade routes, taking advantage of their lucrative revenues and encouraging mercantile activities. Soon after its take over by Mūlarāja, Anhilvada

¹² Jackson, *Delhi Sultanate*, p. 10, Majumdar, *CG*, pp. 131-132, Sheikh, *State and Society*, p. 31

¹³ In 1197, Mu'izz al-Dīn's general, Quṭb al-Dīn Aybeg sacked Anhilvada.

¹⁴ The Bāghelā ruling family of Rewa also traditionally claimed its descent from the Vāghelās of Gujarat.

¹⁵ Sheikh, *State and Society*, p. 49.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, particularly pp. 25-61.

grew as a prosperous urban centre. Similarly, Siddharāja Jayasīṃha expanded Siddhapur and also built the large Śaiva temple complex of Rudramahālaya. Several other towns, located on the hinterlands of major trade routes also flourished in this period. Thus, Bhinmal or Śrīmāla, which lay on the route to Sind from western India, grew into an important town and Dabhoi, Kapadvanj, Godhra, and Dohad flourished on the eastern route between the Malwa hinterland and Cambay.¹⁷ In addition to this, port towns like Cambay and Somanatha prospered and reached a scale that was far greater than the urban centres of the mainland.

The building activities of the Caulukya-Vāghelā rulers also spurred the growth of urban centres. Kings like Mūlarāja, Siddharāja, Karṇa, and others built large temples and encouraged Brahmins to settle in the towns of Gujarat, making over generous grants of villages to them for their maintenance. In addition to asserting their political dominance over the region and their rivals, this also facilitated the development of the urban economy and society. The inscriptions from the period bear witness to this fact, often indicating the place of origin of the Brahmins who settled in Gujarat. Thus, the Balera copper plates of Mularāja dated as early c. 995, for instance, record the grant of a village to Dīrghācārya, a Brahmin who had migrated from Kāṇyakubja.¹⁸ Similarly a grant from Karṇa's reign records the grant of a village in south Gujarat to a Brahmin whose family was originally from *Madhya-deśa*.¹⁹ Several such examples exist of donations and grants to Brahmins, including those who had settled in the region for generations and had come to occupy certain specific parts of it such as the Moḍha Brahmins of

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁸ Sten Konow, ed., "Balera Plates of Mularāja," EI, X (1909-10) pp. 76-79.

¹⁹ G.V. Acharya, ed., *Historical Inscriptions from Gujarat*, vol. 2 (Bombay: Shree Forbes Gujarati Sabha, 1935), pp. 18-24

Moḍherā or the Nāgars, who saw Vāḍnagar or Viśanagār (Viśālanagar) as their traditional homes.

Thus, from their beginnings as descendents of forest chieftains, the Caulukyas were eventually able to make claims to a kingly status over Anhilvada and other parts of Gujarat. As I will discuss in the following sections, the titles they adopted for themselves in their inscriptions indicate that they claimed a high status for themselves in the hierarchies of kings within the subcontinent. By the mid-eleventh century, the Caulukyas also came to make claims over the surrounding territories in southern Rajasthan and western Malwa. Their inscriptions bear witness to the struggle for paramountcy in the region and the conflicts over the establishment of territorial boundaries. Yet the idealised notions of kingship and authority that the Caulukya kings of Anhilvada attempted to create through their inscriptions and building activities did not exist in uncontested isolation from other early medieval polities of north-western India. They faced a number of challenges from within the region and, as their inscriptional and textual records also indicate, tensions and negotiations with other surrounding kingdoms were a permanent feature of their reign.

THE LANGUAGE OF KINGSHIP

The prosperity and extension of settlement that coincided with Caulukya rule was also accompanied by a spectacular cultural efflorescence. As has been noted, these kings engaged in large temple building projects right from the start of their rule. The space of the temple and the Caulukya court emerged as sites for the extensive patronage of literary activities, including the composition of epic poems, dramas, and significantly, a vast number of inscriptions granting lands, primarily to

Brahmins, but often also including long genealogies and eulogies to the kings. The language of these courtly productions was usually Sanskrit and both the literary works as well as the inscriptions drew upon *kāvya* or aestheticised poetry.

In his recent book (and in a series of related articles), Sheldon Pollock has discussed the political function that Sanskrit came to serve in the courtly world of South and Southeast Asia in the first millennium of the current era.²⁰ He demonstrates how, from the fifth century onwards, Sanskrit rapidly began to replace Prakrit as the means of ideological and political expression, particularly in the composition of public inscriptions. This was normally in the form of *prāśasti*, or an eulogistic praise poems about the patron accompanied by a genealogy. Closely related to this development was the rise and growth of *kāvya* literature, from which the composers of the inscriptions drew several elements.²¹ Pollock observes that it was within the space of a century that the elements of this new cultural-political form, a Sanskrit cosmopolitan way of political being spread across southern Asia, at the cost of retarding or even arresting the growth of regional literary traditions.²² "If political will - in the form of a declaration of qualification to rule in consequence of history, identity, piety, valour, intelligence, culture, civility, beauty, and an account of what the rule meant in terms of good works and heroic deeds - was to be expressed in a public text, it would henceforth and

²⁰ See Pollock, *Language*. Pollock had also developed his arguments about this phenomenon and his important formulations on the relationship between the aestheticised form of literature in South Asia, and vernacularisation in the post 1000 CE period have appeared in a series of articles including, "The Cosmopolitan Vernacular," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 57, 1 (February 1998): 6-37 and "India in the Vernacular Millennium: Literary Culture and Polity, 1000-1500," *Daedalus*, 127, 3 (1998): 41-74.

²¹ Pollock notes, however, that very rarely were the writers of inscriptions the same as the poets who composed other forms of textual forms of *kāvya* such as courtly literature to be recited in the royal court, which was to circulate thereafter among literati. Pollock, *Language*, p. 134.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 133.

invariably be expressed in Sanskrit,” he notes.²³ The more mundane aspects of the inscription, that is the actual terms of the grant, for instance, were written in the vernacular. Thus, according to Pollock there emerged two distinct functions for Sanskrit and the vernaculars. Moreover, Sanskrit and the cultural codes represented by *kāvya* had a cosmopolitan quality that made them comprehensible to all those who existed within its ambit. Further, Sanskrit *kāvya* literature had a variety of social spaces of production and consumption but its most primary location was the royal court.²⁴ Poets found patronage as well as fame in this location and very often mastery over grammar and literature was an essential aspect of king’s own success as a ruler. Poets from different parts of the subcontinent could live and work at different courts as Sanskrit language and its aestheticised notions of politics and power were widely understood.

The inscriptions and literary works from Gujarat in this period provide an important example of the growing Sanskrit cosmopolis in the first millennium that Pollock has discussed. Pollock himself focuses on the region for two important reasons: first, in order to present what he considers a representative examples of *praśasti*, in the form of two major inscriptions composed by the Jain poet Śrīpāla, who served at the courts of the Caulukya kings Jayasīṃha Siddharāja and Kumārapāla,²⁵ and second, in an attempt to analyse the close relationship between political power and grammar, he discusses the grammatical works of Hemacandra, a Jain preceptor who also served at the court of the above mentioned

²³ Ibid., 134.

²⁴ Ibid., 184.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 134-136, 144-146, and 584-588. For biographical details of the poet see, B.J. Sandesara, “Śrīpāla-The Blind Poet-laureate at the Court of Siddharāja Jayasīṃha (1094-1143 AD) and Kumārapāla (1143-1174 AD) of Gujarat,” *JOI*, 13 (1964): 252-259.

kings. In the both cases Pollock carefully shows how these works used all the resources available in the Sanskrit language in order to shape and establish their patrons' fame. Thus in the Bilpank *praśasti*, Śrīpāla appears to be much more concerned with announcing his patron dynasty's power upon the earth rather than the accuracy of the genealogy of the kings.²⁶ His aim, according to Pollock, is "to give voice to what is enduring and charismatic about kingly power" and to demonstrate the different constituents of fame such as philanthropy, building projects, battles, all of which were practices that were familiar across the landscape of the Sanskrit *praśasti*.²⁷

The Caulukya kings certainly drew from the pool of inscriptional practices that were available at the time to establish their power and fame and these continued as poets such as Śrīpāla, who were closely associated with the court, were extensively patronised during the Vāghelā reign, as the *praśastis* by Viśāladeva's court poet, Nānaka, among several others, indicate.²⁸ Further, apart from these inscriptions containing eulogies, a variety of other, smaller ones mentioning the names of kings and their genealogies just before making a note of the grant have been found all over the region.

However, the division of cultural labour between Sanskrit and Prakrit that Pollock has discussed is not clearly visible in the inscriptions from Gujarat in this period as both the genealogical as well as the grant portions tend to be inscribed in Sanskrit. In the post-Caulukya period, Gujarat saw extensive inscriptional

²⁶ Pollock, *Language*, p. 145.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ A.S. Gadre, "The Nānaka Praśastis of Viśāladeva of Gujarat (1271 AD)," in *Important Inscriptions from the Baroda State*, vol. 1 (Baroda: M.S. University, 1943): 74-79. Another important example of a *praśasti* from this period comes from the reign of a later Vāghelā king, Saraṅgadeva. See, George Bühler, "The Cintra Praśasti of Sarangadeva," *EI*, I (1892): 271-287.

activity in Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian where a single inscriptional record often used two or even three languages. However, these do not demonstrate the division of labour that Pollock has suggested.²⁹ Pollock himself seems to imply (although he does not elaborate this point) that even after the onset of the 'vernacular' epoch, while inscriptions were issued in regional languages, a similar proliferation did not take place in Gujarati.³⁰

Apart from the wide variety and number of inscriptions that were patronised by the Caulukya and Vāghelā kings of Anhilvada, there are also numerous literary works that were produced by poets and writers who were associated with their court. This points to the existence of a vibrant scholarly circle that may have operated in and around the courts of these kings. Further, while not many inscriptions mention the names of the composers, several end with the names of those who may have written or inscribed them. These included members of the *kāyastha* caste, who appear to have been important administrative intermediaries in this period, contributing to the making of kingship through their literary skills.³¹

The literati that seem to have been an important part of the Caulukya and Vāghelā kingly aspirations were also instrumental in the creation of an image of the kings not only as powerful Kshatriya rulers but also as patrons of literature

²⁹ See Samira Sheikh, "Bilingual Inscriptions."

³⁰ Pollock, *Language*, p. 149.

³¹ The name of a certain Kāyastha Kāncana repeatedly appears in the inscriptions from Mūlarāja's reign. See, for example, "Mūlarāja's Donative Inscription," and "Balera Plates of Mularāja," in Acharya, *HIG*, 2., pp. 9-11 and 12-14. Kāncana's son Vaṭeśwara seems to have written several inscriptions during Bhīmdeva and Karaṇadeva's reigns, suggesting a hereditary connection between this Kāyastha family and the rulers. See, for example, G.S. Gai, "Two Grants of Caulukya Bhimadeva I," in *EI*, XXXVIII (1967), pp. 35-37; "Two Donative inscriptions of Chaulukya Karaṇadeva's Period" and "Sunak Donative Inscription of Karaṇa I," in Acharya, *HIG*, 2, pp. 18-24 and 25-27. Also in *EI*, I (1892), pp 316-318.

and poetry *vis-à-vis* their rivals, particularly the kings of Malwa. According to Pollock, Hemacandra's grammatical works display a keen awareness of the relationship between language and power in this period. The Jain preceptor held an important position at the court of Jayasiraha Siddharāja and Kumārapāla's patronage and apparent conversion to Jainism have been attributed to him. His Sanskrit-Prakrit-Apabhramsha grammar, the *Siddhahemacandra*, was composed at the behest of Siddharāja with the implicit purpose of eclipsing the Sanskrit grammar by the legendary king Bhoja (1011-1055), who was widely known for his literary skills and patronage.³² Copies of the grammar were apparently sent to other kingdoms of the subcontinent, particularly Kashmir, which was viewed as the centre of learning and the abode of Saraswati.³³

Another significant example of this literary world comes from Ajayapāla's Jain minister, Yaśahapāla, who composed a play called the *Moharājaparājaya* (Conquest of the King Moha or Illusion), describing Kumārapāl's conversion to Jain faith and the triumph of the good moral values represented by the Caulukya kings.³⁴ The minister brothers, Vastupāla and Tejapāla, who served at the Vāghelā court and in fact virtually came to control most of the kingdom's administration, also encouraged scholars to work at the court and thus produce works that spoke of the power and prosperity of the Caulukya-Vāghelā kings.³⁵

Thus, along with asserting their rule through military conquest, the Caulukya-Vāghelā kings of Anhilvada also employed poets and scholars who were

³² Pollock, *Language*, p. 181.

³³ B.J. Sandesara, *Literary Circle of Mahāmātya Vastupāla and its Contribution to Sanskrit Literature*, Shri Bhahadur Singh Singhi Memoirs, vol. 3 (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1953), p. 11.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 15 and Majumdar, *CG*, pp. 411-412.

³⁵ See Sandesara, *Literary Circle*, for a detailed account of the poets and writers patronised by Vastupāla as well as for a list of their works.

highly skilled in Sanskrit as well as Prakrit and Apabhramsha, the other cosmopolitan languages of the time. Closely associated with the king and his court, these poets facilitated the kingly 'conquest of the quarters (*digvijaya*)' by singing the glories of their patrons and their ancestors. Many of these poet-scholars were not Brahmins, but followers of the Jain faith, contradicting the traditional Brahmin-Kshatriya nexus and pointing to the complex religious and political landscape of the time.

THE MULTIPLE REPRESENTATION OF KINGSHIP

The poets associated with the Caulukya-Vāghelā court were thus engaged in the production of an image of kingship for their patrons that drew from elements of the cosmopolitan Sanskrit language and which were recognised all over the subcontinent at the time. However, these universalised elements also interacted with the religious and political configurations that were specific to the region or kingdom. It was the combination of these elements that contributed to making the rhetoric of Caulukya-Vāghelā kingship. The strong Śaiva sectarian affiliations of the rulers as well as their close ties to the Jain faith indicate how multiple ideologies of kingship may have co-existed simultaneously at the time.

As Ronald Inden has pointed out, the ultimate object of *dharma* for the Vaṣṇava or Śaiva king was the construction or patronage of a temple. It was with this that he "hoped to top off the cosmo-moral order constituted by his imperial kingdom."³⁶ Thus the temple complexes built by the Caulukyas not only became centres of economic activity, but also symbolised their dominance over the region.

³⁶ Ronald Inden, "Hierarchies of Kings in Early Medieval India," in his *Text and Practice: Essays on South Asian History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 133.

As several of their inscriptions indicate, the kingdom itself was blessed by Śiva and kings like Kumārapāla were adorned by epithets such *umāpativaralabdha* (one who has obtained the boon of the lord of Umā, that is, Śiva). As the numerous attacks on the Somanatha temple during the Caulukya period indicate, these buildings were not only store houses of wealth but were viewed as symbols of the rulers' power even by those who existed outside the kingdom.³⁷

Soon after his accession, Mūlarāja built a temple dedicated to Śiva as Mūlaswāmi (Mūla's lord) and later another temple dedicated to Somanatha at Maṇḍali-nagara, apparently at the god's own bidding.³⁸ Such was the king's dedication that he is also said to have travelled to Somanatha Patan on a daily basis in order to worship the Lord.³⁹ Tradition has it that Somanatha, on being pleased by his dedication, promised to bring the ocean to Anhilvada. When the Lord arrived, as promised, a number of pools in the town turned brackish proving that the ocean had actually accompanied him. To celebrate the deity's arrival, Mūlarāja built the Trīpuruṣaprāsāda temple at Anhilvada. This temple was further adorned with a *ratnakūṭam* or 'jewelled peak' by Bhīma after Maḥmūd Ghazna's attack on the kingdom. Apart from the Rudramahālaya temple at Siddhapur, Jayasīṃha Siddharāja also built Sahasraliṅga (thousand *liṅgas*) lake at Patan. On the behest of his mother, Mayanalladevī, he also remitted the taxes that were being levied on the Anhilvada-Saurashtra border to the pilgrims who were going

³⁷ For the political significance of the Somanatha temple and a nuanced history of Muslim raids on it, see Richard H. Davis, *The Lives of Indian Images* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1999) and Romila Thapar, *Somanatha: The Many Voices of History* (New Delhi: Penguin-Viking, 2004).

³⁸ James McNabb Campbell, *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, 1, 1, History of Gujarat* (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1896), pp. 160-161.

³⁹ This is perhaps unlikely as the round trip between Anhilvada and Somanatha is over 700 miles.

to worship at Somanatha.⁴⁰ Similarly, later kings, including Kumārapāla, who was known to be a follower of the Jain faith, also maintained their patronage and devotion to Śiva, and more specifically to his incarnation as Somanatha.

However, the end of the Vāghelā rule saw the rise of the Jain merchant-minister brothers, Vastupāla and Tejpāla, whose vast marble temple buildings dedicated to their faith bear witness to another form of political rhetoric that had emerged in the region prior to the arrival of the Islamic rule. The two brothers, as has been noted, controlled the entire administrative and military operations of the Anhilvada kingdom and became protagonists of a number of Sanskrit texts and *praśastis* composed in the same elaborate styles used in compositions written for kings.⁴¹

The patronage afforded by these rulers to building projects also encouraged the development of the regional architectural style. The architectural style in the western Indian region encompassing Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Sindh, had begun to develop distinctive features from the eighth century onwards. As Alka Patel has recently noted, while Caulukya ascendancy had little to do with the initiation of this process of architectural consolidation, it is possible that the extensive royal, noble and householder patronage was instrumental in bringing

⁴⁰ Campbell, *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, 1, 1 p. 172.

⁴¹ See for instance *Hammiramadamardana*, a play by Jayasimha Sūri, written sometime between c. 1220 and 1230 and the *Vastupāla-Tejapāla praśasti* by the same author. For the play and the *praśasti* see C.D. Dalal, *Hammiramadamardana of Jayasimha Suri*, Gaekwad's Oriental Series, No. X (Baroda, 1920). The story of another Jain merchant, Jagadadeva or Jagḍu, from the Vāghelā period, also in Sanskrit, indicates how prosperous merchants could also aspire to political power. Jagḍu, the merchant from Bhadreshwar in Kutch, not only supplied the Vāghelā king, Visāldeva, with grains from his stores during a famine, but also built a fortification wall around the city for its protection as well as Śaiva temple and sponsored the repairs of a mosque, despite being a Jain himself. See George Bühler, ed., *The Jagadūcharita of Sarvānanda: A Historical Romance from Gujarat*, Indian Studies no. 1 (Wien: Sitzungberichte der Kais. Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, 1892).

about its culmination.⁴² This regional style (often referred to by art historians as the 'Maru-Gurjara' style) reached its most developed form from the eleventh century onwards and was extensively patronised by the Caulukya kings.⁴³

Integral to this devotion to the Śiva was also the location of the Caulukya kings in their relationship to other kings and rivals. As Inden has discussed, "the cosmo-moral order created and maintained by a Vaiṣṇava or Śaiva king was a very specific ensemble of relations among a hierarchy of lords and their domains."⁴⁴ Thus, the king was to establish his superiority over the constituents of kingship within his kingdom as well as in relation to those situated outside it. In this regard, his most immediate concern was to establish his superiority over his own quarter of the subcontinent.⁴⁵ Moreover, the highest level in this hierarchy was the hierarchy of gods, and the public domain of the king, his palace, the assembly hall, or the throne, were to mirror that very divine order.⁴⁶

The inscriptions of the Caulukyās, which, as I have shown, were predominantly in Sanskrit, are revealing about the terms in which these rulers wished to view or locate themselves *vis-à-vis* their contemporary rivals and subordinates. In addition to the terms they use to designate the rulers, they also

⁴²Alka Patel, *Building Communities in Gujarāt: Architecture and Society During the Twelfth Through Fourteenth Centuries* (Leiden, Boston: E.J. Brill, 2004), pp. 5-6.

⁴³ On the architectural styles of Caulukya temples and details of the building activities of individual rulers, see M.A. Dhaky, "The Chronology of Solanki Temples of Gujarat," *Journal of the Madhya Pradesh Itihas Parishad*, 3 (1961): 1-81.

⁴⁴ Inden, "Hierarchy," p. 134.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 133.

⁴⁶ In his essay on the hierarchies of kings, Inden analyses a treatise on architecture that was produced in the Caulukya court of Anhilvada. This text, entitled *Aparajitapṛcchā*, which was composed by the chief architect of Jayasimha Siddharāja and Kumārapāla, is an instruction manual and, according to Inden, incorporates, along with other similar manuals from this period onwards, the above-described order of political hierarchies into the building of palaces and temples. Ibid., pp. 129-159.

often associate them with Puranic deities. This was the practice in the eulogist *kāvya* effusions of the period and several post-Gupta dynasties claimed relations with dynasties elaborated in the Puranas.⁴⁷ Further, as the collection of state documents from the period entitled the *Lekhāpaddhati* reveals, a standard set of practices that were adopted by the rulers in their inscriptional and other official communications.⁴⁸ Consequently, it can be suggested that the representations of kingship in the inscriptions of the Caulukyās shared a complex dialogic relationship with the Puranas as well as other inscriptions and courtly texts.⁴⁹

Thus, one of Mūlarāja's early inscriptions, granting land for the maintenance of the Rudrmahālaya temple in c. 987 refers to the king as *nṛpādhirāja* (king over kings) and compares him with the deities Brahma, Indra, and Viṣṇu, and refers to him as one who shelters the asylum seekers in the manner of the wish-fulfilling tree, *kalpataru*.⁵⁰ However, in a later inscription, we find him being placed in a rather more confident position as he is endowed with the titles *paramabhaṭṭāraka mahārājādhirāja parameśvara* or supreme master, high king of great kings, supreme lord respectively.⁵¹ These titles implied that the Mūlarāja was an independent king and did not have a relationship of submission to any other

⁴⁷ Daud Ali, "Royal Eulogy as World History: Rethinking Copper Plate Inscriptions in Cōḷa India," in Inden et al., *Querying*, p. 176.

⁴⁸ An excellent translation of this work is to be found in Pushpa Prasad, *Lekhāpaddhati: Documents of State and Everyday Life from Ancient and Early Medieval Gujarat* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁴⁹ Ali has suggested a similar 'intertextuality' in his study of the Cōḷa inscriptions. See *ibid.*, pp. 165-229.

⁵⁰ "Mūlarāja's Donative Inscription," in Acharya, *HIG*, 2, pp. 9-11.

⁵¹ "Balera Plates of Mularāja," in Acharya, *HIG*, 2, pp. 12-14. According to Inden, the title of *paramabhaṭṭāraka* implied mastery of knowledge and was also held by religious preceptors. See Inden, "Hierarchies," p. 139, fn. 19.

king.⁵² The rulers who followed Mūlarāja also often adopted the title *samastarājāvalivirājita mahārājādhirāja* (king of great kings adorned with all the royal epithets), or their inscriptions begin with the term *rājāvali purvavat* (royal epithets as before), thus indicating that the previously enumerated titles were well recognised as symbolising the rulers' authority in the region.⁵³

Apart from these titles, as well as that of the "one who has obtained the boon of the lord of Umā" mentioned earlier, the Caulukyas also sought to link themselves with the Puranic myth of having originated from a divine sacrificial fire. The Vadnagar *praśasti*, a long work containing forty-six verses, from Kumārāpāl's reign, for instance, narrates the story that a warrior (*vīra*) named *culukya* was born out of Brahma's ritual pot (*culuka*, this can also be translated as cup of his hands), which was filled with the waters of the Gaṅgā.⁵⁴ It was from him that the Caulukya dynasty (*vaṁśa*) emerged. Thus, in addition to their independent status, the dynasty sought links with an exalted Puranic past, which was also claimed by their successors, the Vāghelās. The early Vāghelā rulers, in fact, sought to link themselves closely with their predecessors, often making claims on the titles used by them. Thus, an inscription of Arjunadeva (c. 1262-1274) refers to him as *paramēśawara paramabhṭṭāraka mahārājādhirāja*, in the manner of the Caulukyas and also refers to him as the *caulukya cakravartin* (lit. Caulukya paramount king).⁵⁵ As the same inscription indicates, terms such as these (as also

⁵² See *ibid.*, p. 139.

⁵³ V.M. Jha, "Political and Agrarian Structures in Early Medieval India: Three Case Studies from North India (c. 600-1300 AD)," (PhD dissertation: Delhi University, nd), p. 195.

⁵⁴ V.G. Ojha and George Bühler, "The Vadnagar Praśasti of the Reign of Kumarapāla," *EI*, 1 (1892), p. 296.

⁵⁵ D.C. Sircar, "Veraval Inscription of Chaulukya-Vaghela Arjun, 1264" *EI*, XXXIV (1961-62), pp. 141-156.

the use of Sanskrit) had also come to be accepted among the Muslim communities in the region. In this particular case, a ship owner, *nākhudā nuruddin firūj* made a grant for the maintenance of a mosque in the town of Veraval in Kathiawar. Several such inscriptions recording grants from the Jain and Muslims elites from the region bear witness to the acceptance of the Caulukya-Vāghelā authority as well. These also make use of the terminologies and titles used by the grants issued by kings and their officials.

The Caulukya-Vāghelā inscriptions also provide some insight into the different status groups that may have existed within the region and their position *vis-à-vis* the kings. Inscriptions usually mention titles or positions in a descending order, beginning with the king and descending to the lowest official involved. Thus they speak of a variety of administrators and feudatories who shared in the authority of the rulers.

We frequently come across less regal titles such as *rāṇā*, *rāṇakā*, and *rāuta* used for men making grants of lands to temples and temples. Similarly, the term *ṭhākkura* also seems to have been in frequent use. While the former titles appear to denote a higher status than *ṭhākkura*, neither of them seems to be hereditary in nature. The term *ṭhākkura* in fact seems to have had a variety of uses as it was used for wealthy elites as well as for writers of inscriptions. Thus, an inscription from c. 1230 records grant of an *āsana* (seat) for the worship of the god in the Bhṛgu maṭha (monastery) in the reign of *rāṇaka* (*rā-ṇa*) who was the son of *ṭhākkura* Mulu – the father and son hold different titles in this instance.⁵⁶ Another example of the title *rāṇaka* and the complex system of authority under the Caulukya-Vāghelā rulers

⁵⁶ D. B. Diskalkar, "Some Unpublished Inscriptions of the Chaulukyas of Gujarat," *PO*, II, 1, 4 (1938): 222-233.

comes from an inscription from Sāraṅgadeva's reign in c. 1277.⁵⁷ The inscription refers to the auspicious reign of *saptama cakravarti* (seventh paramount king) and *mahārāja* (great king) Sāraṅgadeva. It goes on to note,

in the reign of the *pañcakula*, headed by *maha* [*mahaṇṭa*?] *śrī Pālha*, who was appointed governor (*adhikāri*) of the *saurāṣṭra* country, the son of *rāṇaka śrī Bhojadeva* of the *cāpotkaṭa* (*Cāvaḍā*) family ... granted for the religious benefit of his mother ... a garden (*vāṭikā*) near the river *Dadhimatī* for the worship of *sumatisvāmi*.⁵⁸

Similarly, the Muslim ship-owner mentioned previously had also secured his land from a certain *br̥hat rāja* (big *rājā*) *chāḍā*, who was the son of *rāja nānasimha*, in the presence of the *jamaat* and other prominent people from the village.⁵⁹ All these different uses for similar titles suggest that these were markers of status and identified individuals according to their occupational and administrative positions. Thus, the individual could sometimes inherit a title from his father, at other times it was also possible that he had earned it.⁶⁰

Apart from the Puranic kingly ideals, the Caulukyas also shared a close and complex relationship with the Jain religion. It has already been noted that a number of scholars and poets who served at their courts were adherents of this faith. While the inscriptional records share in the Puranic discourse of kingship, many other texts composed by the Jains reveal a somewhat different view of Caulukya rulers. Thus, apart from their practical involvement with everyday

⁵⁷ D.B. Diskalkar, *PO*, III, 1 (April, 1938), p. 4-6.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6. *Sumatisvāmi* is the fifth *tīrthaṅkara* of the Jains.

⁵⁹ Sircar, "Veraval Inscription."

⁶⁰ For a detailed discussion on the use of status titles in the inscriptions of early medieval north and north western India, see Michael B. Bednar, "Conquest and Resistance in Context: A historiographical reading of Sanskrit and Persian battle narratives." (PhD dissertation: The University of Texas at Austin, 2007), pp. 161-188. I am grateful to Michael Bednar for allowing me to read his dissertation.

political affairs, they also engaged in the broader discourse on the nature of kingship.⁶¹ In their many historical and literary narratives from this period (and also in the subsequent centuries) they portrayed the way in which the rulers should act towards the Jain community and in that sense advanced a distinct theory of kingship.⁶² Thus, as Toshikazu Arai's study of the *Prabandhacintāmaṇi* shows, its fourteenth-century Jain author, Merutuṅga, claims a moral superiority of the religion over Brahminical kingship.⁶³ Merutuṅga's narrative begins with stories of exemplary kings of north India, but it is primarily concerned with the kings of Gurjaradeśa or Gujarat (the Caulukyās) and Malavamaṇḍala or Malwa (the Paramāras). The kings of these counties are portrayed as archenemies and their attributes are also contrasted with one another. As Arai has demonstrated, despite being Śaivas, the Gurjara kings are viewed by the author as representing the superior Jain ideals of kingship through their austerity and fortitude, while the kings of Malwa, though generous patrons of the arts are represented as Brahminical rulers who were wont to succumb to worldly pleasures.

Similarly, John Cort has also demonstrated how different Caulukya kings were perceived in the Jain narrative traditions. Cort does not follow a chronological order in describing the rulers in the Jain worldview, but presents them rather as points on a logical continuum in terms of the perspectives the narratives present on Jain kingship.⁶⁴ Thus, Mūlarāja, while being described as the ideal Śaiva king, was perceived as giving royal support to Jains by building and

⁶¹ John E. Cort, "Who is King? Jain Narratives of Kingship in Medieval Western India," in John E. Cort, ed., *Open Boundaries: Jain Communities and Cultures in History* (New York: SUNY, 1998), p. 86.

⁶² Ibid. For a detailed discussion on the different genres of Jain history, see John E. Cort, "Genres of Jain History," *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 23, 4 (1996): 469-506.

⁶³ Toshikazu Arai, "Jaina Kingship in the *Prabandhacintāmaṇi*," in Richards, *Kingship*, pp. 92-132.

⁶⁴ Cort, "Who is King?" p. 86.

endowing temples to Jain gods.⁶⁵ While Jaisinhha is also viewed in a similar manner, he differs from Mūlarāja in his support for Jain mendicants and scholars. Influenced by the scholarly debates on Jainism in his kingdom, he is seen as a Śaiva king whose attitude is tempered by a tolerance towards all religions.⁶⁶ The narrative of Vanrāja, the founder of the city of Anhilvada, however, perceives him as “Jainized king” according to Cort, as in his early childhood he underwent the training of a Jain monk and was assisted in the establishment of his small kingdom by several Jain laymen.⁶⁷ However, it is only Kumārapāla who himself became a Jain, and is depicted in the narratives as a quasi mendicant. He was thus seen as being both personally and politically involved in the Jain moral universe and therefore in a Jain theory of kingship.⁶⁸

The Caulukya-Vāghelā rhetoric of kingship thus drew upon elements from contemporary literary and political discourses. They chose to project themselves in their inscriptional records as the ideal devotees of the Puranic deity, Śiva, and proclaimed an independent status in the early stages of their rule. The presence of a network of scholars and writers in these records also points to the different elements that may have contributed to the making of this rhetoric of kingship and also their political authority in the region. In this context, it is also worth analysing representations of their own kingdom as well as their enemies or the political geography in order to further understand the manner in which these kings chose to imagine and project their rule.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 89.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 89-94.

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 94-96.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 103.

POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY AND THE ASSERTION OF RULE

The Caulukyas, as I have discussed, managed to extend their rule over a considerable part of the region as the inscriptions associated with their rule demonstrate. However, literary texts and inscriptions related to these rulers also reveal a sense of political geography in which the regions of Malavadeśa and Saurashtra often appear an important foil against which they sought to define themselves. The rivalry of the rulers of mainland Gujarat with the rulers of these two neighbouring regions was not only restricted to the Caulukya period but was to continue throughout the Sultanate rule as well.

The rulers of Anhilvada and Mālvadeśa rivalled one another in the expansion of frontiers and consolidation of authority. The *Prabandhacintāmaṇi* traces the roots of this rivalry between the two kingdoms to the reign of Caulukya king, Cāmuṇḍarāja, who after ruling for over thirteen years established his brother's son Bhīma on the throne, proceeded towards Vārāṇasī in order to live a life of devotion.⁶⁹ Merutuṅga notes that on his way to the holy city the king reached the country of Malwa. In Malwa, in central India,

he was called upon by king Muñja to give up the umbrella (*chatra*) and other royal insignia (*cinha*), and to continue his journey in a poorly clad pilgrim (*kārpaṭika*), or to fight his way through.⁷⁰

When this message was delivered to him, he perceived that an obstacle to his religious resolutions had arisen. He then narrated the occurrence to Bhīma and went on to the holy place in the dress of a pilgrim and gained paradise. The text asserts that it was from that day onwards that the enmity between the kings of

⁶⁹ Merutungacharya, *Prabandhacintāmaṇi*, p. 29-30.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 30.

Gujarat and Malwa originated.⁷¹ For Merutuṅga, as has been previously noted, this rivalry was a reflection of the moral superiority of the Anhilvada kings. However, Caulukya inscriptions also appear to be concerned with displaying their military superiority over their eastern rivals in Malwa, also referred to as Avanti. Numerous Caulukya inscriptions display an anxious engagement with the conquest of Avanti, the rulers often being endowed with the epithet *avantinātha* (the lord of Avanti). The Vadnagar *praśasti* from Kumārapala's reign is an interesting example that reveals the Caulukya kings' desires to be viewed as superior to their eastern neighbours.

The *praśasti* praises the Caulukya kings in many different ways and goes on to describe the virtues of Ānandanagara (mod. Vadnagar), the traditional settlement of the Nagars, a prominent Brahmin community in Gujarat. However, each ruler's victory over Malwa, real or imagined, is mentioned in exceptional detail:

...Vallbharāja ... astonished the circle of the earth by his bold deeds. Densely dark smoke, rising from the empire of the Mālava king, who quaked on hearing of his marching, indicated the spread of the fire of his anger.⁷²

... illustrious king Bhīmadeva, who, though terrible (*bhīma*) to his foes, ever granted enjoyment to his friends, as ruler carried this load of the earth. What wonder was there that his horses, supremely skilled in accomplishing the five paces, quickly gained Dhârâ, the city of the *mālavacakravartī* [paramount king of Malwa] ”⁷³

the illustrious king Jayasimhadeva-Siddhâdhirāja , who frightened all rulers of the earth by the manner in which he fettered the proud king of Mālava ...⁷⁴

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ojha and Bühler “Vadnagar Praśasti,” verse 10, p. 297.

⁷³ Ibid., verses 12, 13, p. 297.

⁷⁴ Ibid., verse 16.

The scion of the Chaulukya kings [Kumārapāla] shot one flight of arrows into the supreme king of men, Arjorāja, and made [the goddess] Chaṇḍī, who was seated on his arm, drunk by satisfying her with the gushing blood, and he charmed her when she was desirous of taking a toy-lotus, with the lotus-head of the Mālava lord, that was suspended at his gate.⁷⁵

The subjugation of Avanti thus appears to have had a significant place in Chaulukya political rhetoric.⁷⁶ However, the terms of subjection never appear to be clear and descriptions from the *Prabandhacintāmaṇi* and other sources show that the balance of power between the two was ever shifting and that each of the kingdoms dominated the other at some time.

A similar regional rivalry can be discerned during this period between Gujarat and Saurashtra. One of the earliest instances of tension between the rulers of Anhilvada Patan and this region is visible in Mūlarāja's campaign against its rulers and their allies in the kingdom of Kutch. The pastoralist ethos of these regions differed significantly from that of the mainland and Cuḍāsamā rulers of Saurashtra are often referred to as *abhīras* or *āhīras* (cowherds). Grāharipu, ruler of Vāmanasthalī, the modern Vanthali (west of Junagadh) at the time, is commonly described as a "cow-eating *mleccha*" and a "tyrannical shepherd" who caused great hindrance to the pilgrims travelling to Prabhas or Somanatha as he was opposed to the Brahmins.⁷⁷

Interestingly, Hemacandra's *Dvayāśrayakāvya* refers to him as the follower of the Cārvāka philosophy of materialism and therefore naturally opposed to sages

⁷⁵ Ibid., verses 20-22, p. 298.

⁷⁶ For more instances see "Gālā Inscription of Siddharāja Jayasimha" in Acharya, *HIG*, 2, pp. 28-29, "Kumarapāla's Stone Inscription" in *ibid.*, pp. 52-54, "Donative Copperplate Inscription of King Bhimadeva II," *ibid.*, pp. 78-80.

⁷⁷ Campbell, *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, 1, 1, p. 160, and A.K. Forbes, *Rās-Mālā: Hindu Annals of Western India with Particular Reference to Gujarat*, vol. 1 (New Delhi, 1973 [1878]).

and sacrifices.⁷⁸ The Caulukya sources thus claim that it was due to this oppression of the pilgrims by Grāharipu that Mūlarāja decided to attack his territories.⁷⁹ However, Grāharipu's control of the lucrative route to Somanatha and his access to allies like the ruler of Sindh and the Bhils on the north-west frontier of the region, as also to the ruler of Kutch, may have contributed to him being a formidable rival in terms of economic and military resources. The version of the tale of Lākhā's death in the *Prabandhacintāmaṇi*, in fact, confirms this possibility. Lākhā, the king of Kutch, was the son of a Paramāra woman named Kāmalatā and a cowherd called Phulaḍa. He was regarded as virtually invincible as he had received protection from Yaśorāja or Yaśovarman of Malwa,⁸⁰ perhaps because he belonged to the Paramāra clan himself. Lākhā is noted to have repulsed Mūlarāja's armies on several occasions. The Caulukya king only defeated and killed him by resorting to treachery (and by the divine intervention of lord Śiva).⁸¹ The kingdoms of Saurashtra and Kutch, to the west of the Caulukya capital, were thus considerably powerful and remained so in the decades after Mūlarāja's reign.

We find mention of the abhīra king of Saurashtra once again in the reign of Jayasīṃha Siddharāja (1094-1143 CE). Siddharāja killed his long-standing rival, Rā Khengār, the Cuḍasamā chieftain of Girnar, by treacherous means. The roots of this rivalry had a history that went beyond Khengār's own reign; his father had once encountered Siddharāja on the borders of Saurashtra where the Caulukya

⁷⁸ Satya Pal Narang, *Hemacandra's Dvayāśraya. A Literary and Cultural Study*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1972, p. 79.

⁷⁹ Forbes's account also notes that it was Lord Śiva or Somanātha himself who appeared in Mūlarāja's dream asking him to destroy "... Grāh Ripoo and other Dytes (or demons), who laid waste the sacred place of pilgrimage at Prubhās, and assuring him that "by my splendour you shall have victory." Forbes, *Rās Mālā*, p. 39.

⁸⁰ Merutungacharya, *Prabandhacintāmaṇi*, p. 28.

⁸¹ Ibid.

had disarmed him and forced him 'to take grass in his mouth' as a form of submission. The bardic sources also inform us that the Khengār had married Rāṇakadevī, a beautiful woman who the Caulukya chieftain had once desired for himself.⁸² After the victory, Siddharāja appears to have placed a governor in Girnar. Another conflict, this time over the construction of a temple at Pālītāṇa, appears to have taken place during the reign of Kumārapāla (1143-1174). The Anhilvada army commanded by Kumārapāla's minister, Udayana, was defeated by a Samara chieftain of Saurashtra during an attempt to convert a wooden temple at Palitana into a permanent stone structure.⁸³

We do not have inscriptions issued by the chieftains of Saurashtra and Kutch in this period to give us a sense of how they may have chosen to articulate this relationship. Yet, from the Caulukya and later Persian records it can be gleaned that these were regions dominated by pastoralist forms of polity with chieftains fighting over land, resources, and livestock.⁸⁴ In their conflict with the Caulukyas they are constantly represented as obstructing the former's Brahminical aspirations as they seem to be extracting levies from the pilgrims travelling to Somanatha, Dwaraka or Palitana. In this (though not explicitly mentioned), they also become rivals for the economic resources of these pilgrim centres (as has been mentioned earlier, Jayasīṃha Siddharāja was believed to have been collecting a large amount of taxes from the pilgrims on the Anhilvada-Saurashtra border before his mother intervened to stop this practice). The inscriptions and chronicles in fact appear to be using formulaic terms like *mleccha*

⁸² Forbes, *Rāsa-Mālā*, pp.120-121.

⁸³ Campbell, *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, 1, 1, p. 187.

⁸⁴ Sheikh, *State and Society*, p. 73.

to describe the rulers of Saurashtra who had been used by earlier Sanskrit sources to describe 'outsiders' and would in a somewhat later period be used for the Muslims. This pastoralist political system, which had affinities with those of Rajasthan and Sind, later developed into a number of chieftaincies whose leaders made claims on a Rajput descent. The Caulukya chronicles and records mention their successes against Saurashtra. Despite this, almost every ruler of the dynasty appears to have fought a battle with the chieftains from this region. The terms of submission owed to their Caulukya adversaries were, however, never made clear in the inscriptional records.

Throughout the Caulukya-Vāghelā reign, and subsequently during the rule of the sultans, the tensions between the two regions continued. As has already been noted, Somanatha and its wealth were not only coveted by the Islamic conquerors of the region, but also by the rulers of mainland Gujarat. Similarly, smaller chieftains like the Gohils of Peerum, in coastal Saurashtra, became the bane of Sultan Muḥammad Tughluq's attempts to establish control over the region. Mokhrājī, who was the leader of the Gohils in this period, plundered a number of merchant vessels travelling to the gulf of Kathiawar, thus most certainly putting a strain on the imperial revenues. The battle that ensued appears to have been a long and bloody one where the Gohil chieftain and his men kept the Sultan's army at bay for a considerable length of time before their fort was completely destroyed around c. 1349. Right from the governorship of Zafar Khān, the regional sultans also had to face the difficult task of subduing the chieftains of Saurashtra. As in the case of the Caulukyās, the terms of submission remained obscure and it was only with the military and administrative policies of Maḥmūd Begaḍā, in the late fifteenth century that more definitive control was achieved.

CONCLUSION

The last Vāghela king, Karaṇ, more popularly referred to as '*ghelo*' or mad, was defeated by 'Alā' al-Dīn's brother Ulugh Khān and the general Nuṣrat Khān in c. 1298.⁸⁵ Karaṇ was forced to flee the region and take refuge with Rāmdeva, the king of Devagiri in the Deccan. While the Vāghelā king is believed to have returned to his capital after the Khaljī army had departed, his wife and daughter were taken into 'Alā' al-Dīn's harem and attained prominent positions there.⁸⁶ The Khaljī army proceeded from Anhilvada Patan in the north to the temple of Somanatha in the south-west of the peninsula, plundered its vast wealth and destroyed the temple. Nuṣrat Khān also marched to and plundered the prosperous city of Cambay where a governor was established to manage the local affairs. Ulugh Khān became the governor of Gujarat from where he was only recalled to Delhi twenty years later and put to death by the emperor on grounds of suspected treason.

Ulugh Khān's departure, however, caused considerable disarray among the nobility in the Gujarat government. Gujarat was a lucrative source of wealth for the sultanas of Delhi and its subjugation was therefore important (although complete control was never achieved). Sedition was widespread until the new governor arrived from Delhi with a powerful army, quelled the rebellion, and

⁸⁵ One of the earliest novels to have been written in Gujarati language was based on the life of Karaṇ '*ghelo*.' This work by Nandshankar Tuljashankar Mehta was also the first among the popular genre of historical novels written in Gujarati in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These, particularly, Munshi's writings, became extremely popular among the Gujaratis at the time and in the later generations.

⁸⁶ Ferishta refers to this in passing. See Mahomed Kasim Ferishta, *History of the Rise of Mahomedan Power in India*, 1, John Briggs, trans (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1981 [1929]), pp. 184-185. Somewhat earlier, the poet Amir Khusraw (c. 1253-1324) had written of the romance between the emperor's son Khidr Khān and Karaṇ's daughter, Dewal Devi, and given it a legendary form in his epic poem variously titled *Ashiqā* or *Dewal Rāni wa Khizr Khān*. For details of this romance and other works of Khusraw, see Bednar, "Conquest and Resistance," pp. 18-126.

restored order in c. 1318. Subsequently, when Sultan Muḥammad Tughluq ascended the throne of Delhi he was also faced with a series of rebellions from parts of his army in Gujarat as well as in Sindh. Apart from the trouble he faced from his recalcitrant nobles, many of whom were Afghans, he was also forced to contend with the locally powerful chieftains, particularly, the Gohils, who controlled the island of Piram near the Gulf of Cambay.

Soon after this event, Sultan Muḥammad Tughluq travelled across the Indus to Sindh from where he moved towards Thatta in order to suppress the Sumras who were sheltering a rebel. Here, however, he succumbed to ill health and died in early 1351. Fīrūz Shāh (c. 1351-1388) succeeded him to the throne of Delhi. Gujarat remained a source of trouble during this period. It was only with the accession of Naṣīr al-Dīn or Muḥammad Shāh II, in c. 1391 that the rebellions of the local administrative bureaucracy and the locally powerful chieftains were brought under control by Ṣafar Khān, the last governor of Gujarat to be appointed from Delhi before the establishment of Mughal rule.

In this chapter, I have described the political and cultural elements that were a feature of the wider region of Gujarat during the domination of the Caulukyas and their successors, the Vāghelās. After discussing the take over of the Anhilvada kingdom by the Caulukyas from their Cāvḍā relatives, and the expansion of settlement under these rulers, I went on to focus on the various ideological and representative aspects of their rule. The Caulukya and Vāghelā kings chose to use the cosmopolitan Sanskrit language in their public inscriptions along with all the literary devices that were prevalent in the aestheticised *kāvya* form of poetry as well as eulogy writing. The rulers also patronised a wide variety of scholars, both

Brahmins and Jains, many of whom contributed to the manner in which the kings were to be portrayed in their literary and inscriptional records. The rhetoric of kingship was further promoted by the widespread construction of temples and the projections of themselves as great devotee of the Puranic deity Śiva. As was the norm in Sanskrit inscriptions (and textual discourses), the rulers were also seen to be equal to a number of other Puranic deities, thus closely associating them with a divine hierarchy. Further, the use of titles such as *paramabhaṭṭāraka mahārājādhirāja parameśvara* located them at the highest position within the hierarchy of human kings that was prevalent in the subcontinent at the time. Caulukya-Vāghela inscriptions also give an indication of other status titles that were used in the region, but in most of the inscriptions where men of titles such as *rāṇaka* or *ṭhakkura* were mentioned, the authority of the ruling dynasty was always acknowledged.

In addition to the rhetoric of kingship drawn from the epic-Puranic tradition, however, the Caulukya-Vāghelā reign was also the subject of several Jain narratives, which viewed them as representing the values of ideal Jain kingship. Thus, the Caulukya-Vāghelā discourse on kingship reflected the multiplicity of traditions that were present at the time. Finally, in continuation of the discussion on the ideological representations of kingship, I also focused on aspects of the imagined political geography. The rulers of Anhilvada in north-eastern Gujarat saw themselves as distinct from their rivals in Saurashtra and Malwa and drew great prestige in representing themselves as conquerors of these regions.

The political and ideological features of the Caulukya-Vāghelā rule in early-medieval Gujarat form the background to the changes that were to follow in the region in the fourteen and fifteenth centuries. In the historiography of

Gujarat, the end of the Caulukya-Vāghelā dynasty has been viewed as a period of degeneration and decline. However, I discuss in the following chapters, the rule of the regional sultans did not result in a complete change in the cultural and social realms. Many of the elements from these continued to flourish and were very often reconfigured to suit the needs of the new political exigencies.

Chapter 2

Local Chieftains and the Emerging Sultanate: The Story of Raṇmall

The gradual disintegration of the Caulukya-Vāghelā rule in north and central Gujarat and the establishment of a governor from Delhi over the city of Anhilvada did not result in the simultaneous establishment of the Delhi Sultans' strong hold control all over Gujarat, Kathiawar, and Kutch. While Anhilvada and other Caulukya territories, as well as the prosperous port towns of Cambay, Bharuch, and Surat, were brought under their sway, large tracts of land remained independent of sultanate control. These independent tracts of land opened up opportunities for locally powerful men, many of whom were immigrants who had obtained land from the Caulukya-Vāghelā rulers.

As has previously been noted, pastoralist groups had a long history of migration and settlement into the region from the north-west frontier beyond Sindh as well as from southern Rajasthan and the north-eastern frontier bordering Malwa. Several of these groups had been in the service of the Anhilvada kings, often in return for the lands granted to them. With the end of the Vāghelā supremacy over Anhilvada these men were able to establish political strongholds all over the region. Often, the more successful of these gained control over forested hills on important trade routes and militarily strategic locations. Thus, for instance, the Gohils, mentioned in the previous chapter, became prominent in the strategic island of Piram during the Delhi Sultanate incursions and were a significant threat to the shipping and trading activities in the region.

The Cūḍāsamās also remained important in their traditionally held hilly region of Junagadh in Saurashtra and made claims over its natural resources, trading caravans and lucrative pilgrim traffic.¹ Similarly, in the east, the fortifications over the Pavadgadh hill had begun to take shape towards the end of the Vāghelā rule in the latter half of the thirteenth century.² Further to the north-east, Idar, which had once been part of Vāghelā territories gradually came under the control of the Rāṭhoḍ clan that had migrated from Rajasthan.³

These went on to form what can be called 'local kingdoms.'⁴ Under their chieftains, these lineages or families controlled the local production networks in the form of agricultural and forested lands as well as trade and pilgrimage routes, thus acting as a threat to any form of regional or subcontinental rulers. The produce from these regions, whether agricultural or of the forest, was a vital element in the consolidation of the empire. Control over these territories remained difficult, for as long as Gujarat was to remain a part of the larger empire of the Delhi Sultanate. However, with the gradual decline of the resonances of the Delhi authority in the province, powerful nobles and regional sultans attempted to bring the chieftains (along with their lands and other resources) more effectively under their sway. Even so, the familiarity with the terrain they controlled and the

¹ Sheikh, *State and Society*, p. 68.

² R.N. Mehta, *Chāṃpāner: Ek Adhyayan* (Champaner: A Study) (Vadodara: Mahārājā Sayājīrāo Viśvavidyālaya, 1979).

³ Majumdar, *CG*, p. 180.

⁴ Bernard B. Cohn, "Political Systems in Eighteenth Century India: The Banaras Region," *JAOS*, 82, 3 (1962), pp. 313-314. Cohn uses the term for the smallest political unit that was operational during the eighteenth century. However, it was in the period under review that the foundations of many such kingdoms were laid and in the colonial period also went on to form the numerous native or princely states.

protection they received from the forts they built around their territories made the task of controlling them far from simple. While the sultans of Gujarat (and later also the Mughals) often categorised them as *zamindars*, the chieftains preferred to style themselves as *rājās* or kings, and eventually adopted the open-ended, exalted social category of 'Rajput'. In addition to this, many of them gradually sought to obliterate their obscure origins by setting up courts based on classical Indic models and patronising poets and Brahmins in their well-defended forts.

The local chieftains of Gujarat were thus experiencing internal flux and external political changes as they sought to establish their social and political positions *vis-à-vis* the new sultans and establish a place for themselves in the wider *varṇa* hierarchy. The manner in which the chieftains imagined these changes, and their attempts at asserting their identity and authority over their territories, can be gleaned from some of the literary narratives produced for these groups. In this chapter, I focus on one such literary narrative from the hill kingdom of Idar situated in north-eastern Gujarat. This is the *Raṇmallachanda* (henceforth *RC*), the biography of Raṇmall (lit. Raṇmall's metre). The narrative is the story of Idar's Rāṭhoḍ chieftain who controlled the region during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Composed in a form of Old Gujarati (also called Old Western Rajasthani) by a Brahmin poet named Śrīdhara Vyāsa, this work is one of the earliest available narratives to speak of the early encounters between the regional sultans and the local chieftains.

In the previous chapter, I discussed how the Caulukya and Vāghelā representations of kingship projected these rulers as independent Kshatriya kings. These were great warriors who received their kingdom as a boon from Śiva himself.

Their public inscriptions used Sanskrit, a language closely associated with political power, and drew on elements of the traditional *kāvya* literature which were in vogue in courts all over India. However, the decline of this traditional kingdom of the Caulukya-Vāghelā rulers (along with other kingdoms, like those of the Paramāras of Malwa or the Yadavas of Devagiri), and the rise of the Delhi Sultanate in the north from the twelfth century onwards interrupted the long-established forms of social and political authority. These were further modified as their successor sultanates attempted to consolidate their hold over the different regions. These changes also led to changes in the vocabulary in which kingship and authority were articulated by the local elites in their literary traditions, particularly during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In these, a battle between a local chieftain and a Muslim sultan became the central theme and the latter were often portrayed in exaggeratedly evil terms. A similar need for the assertion of authority was felt by the Muslim rulers, whose literary effusions also displayed a prejudice against the 'infidels.'

The existence of such literary narratives led Aziz Ahmad to suggest that these were in fact located in two different linguistic, religious, and historical cultures. He referred to them as the "Muslim epics of conquest" and "Hindu epics of resistance."⁵ The two kinds of literary narratives, for Ahmad, were thus completely distinctive, having developed in ignorance of each other, and differing in their readership as the Muslim epics were composed in Persian while their Hindu counterparts used either Sanskrit or the vernaculars. Thus they did not develop in "conscious opposition" to one another but according to Ahmad, "one of them was rooted in the challenge of asserting the glory of Muslim presence and the

⁵ Aziz Ahmad, "Epic and Counter-epic in Medieval India," *JAOS*, 83 (1963), p. 470.

other in the repudiating it.”⁶ Recently however, Michael Bednar has made a close study of the narratives which Ahmad divided into the two distinctive cultural categories.⁷ Bednar engages in close readings of these narratives and their tropes to show how these apparently distinctive literary traditions in fact interacted closely with one another. While the Persian tradition, represented here by Amir Khusraw made extensive use of Indic imagery, the Sanskrit and vernacular traditions represented the Muslims as carriers of an emerging Rajput identity. Thus, Bednar’s study reveals that in crossing these literary boundaries these narratives display a “single social, cultural, and historical attitude that existed in a literary and cultural symbiosis.”⁸ Though not arguing directly with Ahmad, other recent studies on literary narratives from the medieval period have also suggested that the ‘epics of conquest,’ and ‘epics of resistance’ were not watertight but reflected a shared literary and cultural tradition of exchange and negotiation based on their contemporary political contexts.⁹

In its central theme, and the manner in which it depicts the enemy, Śrīdhara Vyāsa’s narrative of Raṇmall could be classified as a typical ‘epic of resistance’. However, its use of Sanskrit and the vernacular as well as a variety of Persian (and Persianised) words reflects the poet’s awareness of the multiple literary traditions that were prevalent in the region and could be harnessed in

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Bednar, “Conquest and Resistance”.

⁸ Ibid., p. xvi.

⁹ Ramya Sreenivasan’s recent work on the narratives of the Rajput queen Padmini, for instance, suggests a rich exchange between the Persian and Indic tradition but also reveals a close interaction between other languages and genres all over the subcontinent. See Ramya Sreenivasan, *Many Lives of a Rajput Queen: Heroic Past in India C. 1500-1900* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2007).

order to produce a heroic account of Raṇmall's resistance to Zafar Khān (later sultan Muẓaffar Shāh).

In this chapter, I focus on the manner in which the poet imagines the Delhi governor's encroachment on Raṇmall's territory and on his rights over its produce. I analyse how the poet projects his protagonist as a valorous warrior hero who thwarts every attempt by the Muslim or *yavana* forces to capture his kingdom. In doing this, the poet draws on elements from the classical Sanskrit literary tradition to project him as a typical Kshatriya king. However, these elements are closely interwoven with the vernacular and oral literary traditions that speak of a warrior identity of the kind that Dirk Kolff has discussed. This identity, as I have already noted, was an open-ended one and allowed for the inclusion of fighting men of varying origins. In Śrīdhara Vyāsa's composition we see an eclectic drawing of elements from different cultural traditions of the times and the existence of an intricate dialogue between them. In the following sections, I argue that this multiplicity is reflective of the emergent ideas of kingship and authority in the local kingdoms of Gujarat in the early fifteenth century. As I have also noted, this was the period in which groups of obscure origins were establishing themselves politically and socially in the region. In a narrative such as the RC we see the early local manifestations of what was to emerge as a pan-Indian warrior identity in the form of the category of the 'Rajput.' This identity was the result of a gradual diffusion of the ideas that developed at the regional and local levels as chieftains and mercenary warriors negotiated their own social and political positions *vis-à-vis* the Islamic sultanates.

This chapter is a discussion of an early encounter between a local chieftain and the newly emerging regional sultanate of Gujarat. It begins with a discussion of

the nature of the text, the poet, Śrīdharā Vyāsa, the languages that he uses, as well as the key elements of the plot. The next two sections discuss the specific political history of the period and of Raṇmall's career as described in other sources from the region. These are followed by a detailed analysis of the poet's representation of his protagonist's place in the political fluctuations of fifteenth-century Gujarat.

THE POET AND THE NARRATIVE

Very little is known about Śrīdhara Vyāsa, the Brahmin composer of the *RC*. Scholars of Gujarati literature associate him with two other works from the period entitled *Īśvarīchaṇḍa* and *Bhāgavat Daśamaskaṇḍa*.¹⁰ However, even though nothing is known about his identity, circumstantial evidence contained in the text makes it possible to draw a few general inferences about his context. First, the mention of Temūr's campaign to Delhi suggests that Śrīdhara Vyāsa wrote his panegyric to Raṇmall after this event.¹¹ The mention of names of various Delhi Sultanate official who were stationed in Gujarat at the time further strengthens this evidence. Secondly, it is also possible to infer that the poet had a fair knowledge of the current affairs in the hill-fort of Idar as not only does he mention the names of the specific individuals but also gives descriptions of the hill and its surrounding terrain. It is not clear, however, whether the poet was actually commissioned to compose the work by the Idar chieftains themselves. However, the projection of

¹⁰ Balvant Jani in K. Ayyappa Paniker, ed., *Medieval Indian Literature: An Anthology*, vol. 2 (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1999), p. 48 and Umashankar Joshi, Ananatarai Raval, and Yashvant Shukla, eds, *Gujarātī Sāhityano Itihās (History of Gujarati Literature)*, vol. 1 (Ahmedabad: Gujarat Sahitya Parishad, 2001), p. 216.

¹¹ K.B. Vyas, ed. and trans, "Raṇmall Chanda' of Śrīdhar Vyāsa: A Rare Historical Saga in Old Gujarati," *ABORI*, LIX (1973), verse 5, p. 156. I have used Vyas's edition of the text throughout this chapter. The translations, however, are mine.

the protagonist as a brave and virtuous warrior suggest that the text was meant for courtly consumption either by Raṇmall himself or his immediate successors. The poet's invocation to Śiva at the beginning of the narrative suggests that he may have been affiliated to one of the Śaiva sects that were popular in the region during the period, although this is not definite.

The RC, as I have noted, is the tale of the Rāṭhoḍ chieftain, Raṇmall and his encounter with Zafar Khān the governor of Anhilvada Patan between the years 1391 and 1403, after which he declared himself an independent ruler. Briefly, Śrīdhara Vyāsa's account of the encounter between the two adversaries is as follows. The first ten invocatory verses are in Sanskrit and act as something of a preview, where the poet introduces the subject of his work. Thus, he notes,

Having bowed down to *śankara*, the lord of the *gaṇas*, I begin this
fascinating *chanda*,
I will narrate the exploits of Raṇmall, the mighty rival (*pratimalla*) of
the king of the *yavanas* (*yavanabhūpa*).¹²

After the initial invocation in Sanskrit, the tale begins rather forcefully with the information that the commander of an army of seventeen thousand soldiers has sent a message (lit. a request or *ardās*) to the sultan (*suratrāḥaṇa*). This message informs him that Raṇmall, the unparalleled *hindū*, has captured all the grain that had been collected as revenue by the sultanate forces.¹³ Further, we are told,

But inordinately fond of battle, Raṇmall does not accept the orders
(*firamān*) and authority (*āṇa*) of the sultan (*suratrāṇi*).
Just as the brave Hammīra of Sambhara, the *kamadhajja* (Rāṭhoḍ)
twirls his moustaches [presumably in defiance].¹⁴

¹² RC, verse, 1, p. 156.

¹³ Ibid., verse 11, p. 157.

¹⁴ Ibid., verse 12. This motif occurs repeatedly in the narrative. Raṇmall as well as his adversaries twirl their moustache on several occasions to assert their defiance and arrogance. See verses 19, 20, 54, 60, and 64.

The Sultan responds by ordering his vast army to launch an attack on the defiant chieftain. Most of the tale that follows is about the nature of the battle that ensues; there are fearful scenes in which war drums and trumpets resound as the armies move forward. The poet also describes the equipment used and the destruction brought upon the respective armies. The sultanate commander, however, makes one more attempt at frightening the rebellious Raṇmall into surrender. Raṇmall refuses to comply. The narrative then goes on to describe the armies and the elaborate scenes of battle. After the gory death of hosts of *yavanas* the battle finally ends in Raṇmall's victory. Interestingly, none of the men from Raṇmall's army appear to have been injured.

The bulk of the narrative of the *RC* is in Old Gujarati.¹⁵ It is composed, as the name suggests in the *chanda* genre, a metrical style of '*gurjara-apabhraṃśa*' literature and a precursor to the *cāraṇi dīṅgal*, the style used by the traditional genealogist-poets of the region.¹⁶ The word *chanda* usually refers to a type of poetic metre, but as a literary genre it appears to contain a variety of rhyming metres. The Sanskrit portion is composed in the *āryā* metre but in the rest of the narrative the poet deploys the *bhujāṅgaprayāt*, *chuppaī*, *dūhā* or *dūhu*, *dumilā*, *kavitta*, *marahaṭṭā*, *pañchāmar*, and *siṃhaviḷokit* metres, which are all typical of the Apabhramsha and oral traditions of the *bhāṣ* and *cāraṇ*s of north-western India.¹⁷

¹⁵ This language is sometimes also referred to as Old Western Rajasthani.

¹⁶ Keshavaram K. Shastri, "Rās ane Phāgu Sāhitya," Umashankar Joshi, Ananatarai Raval, and Yashvant Shukla, eds, *Gujarātī Sāhityano Itihās* (History of Gujarati Literature) vol. 1 (Ahmedabad: Gujarat Sahitya Parishad, 2001), pp. 216-217.

¹⁷ *Chuppaī* is a metre typically associated with oral genres of literature in Old Gujarati. The word itself means 16 but in Gujarat there has been a tradition of using 15 *matras* per pada. Amaresh Datta, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1987), p. 670.

Śrīdhara Vyāsa's other work, the *Īśwarīchanda* is also a similar combination of metres written in praise of the goddess Durga.

Thus the texture of the narrative is quite different from the cosmopolitan classical genre of Sanskrit *kāvya*, which had been in use for the composition of inscriptions in Gujarat during the Caulukya-Vāghelā period (and as the following chapter will demonstrate, in the fifteenth century as well). In the RC, Śrīdhara Vyāsa, presents a narrative more akin to the oral traditions of the region and makes frequent use of alliterations that lend his text performative character. These forms lend themselves to recitation with considerable dramatic force. Thus, a typical verse in the text reads,

*damadamkār damāma damakkīya, dhamdham dhamdham dhol dhamakīya,
taravar taravar vesa pahaṭṭiya, tara tara turak paḍii talahaṭṭiya.*¹⁸

It is nearly impossible to replicate these alliterations in an English translation. Also, the onomatopoeic representations of drums and battle sounds, which contribute so strongly to the drama, cannot be reproduced in English. The translation can only go as far as,

The drums (*damāma*) beat loudly, the *dhol*s (another type of drum)
sounded noisily (*dhamdham dhamdham*),
Rapidly (*taravara taravara*) changing their garbs (*veśa*), the turak
[turaks] fall in position at the base of the hill (*talahaṭṭiya*).

At certain points in the narrative the poet also alters familiar words to suit the sound effects or resonances that they may produce. Thus, when read aloud, the RC conjures up an image of the dusty and noisy battlefield of the Idar hill. The language is also freely interspersed with vernacularised forms of Persian and Arabic words. These include, among others, words such as *baṇḍā*, *bārjāra* (bazaar), *firamān*,

¹⁸ RC, verse 47, p. 160.

foja (fauj, army), *halāl*, *harām*, *khān*, *māl*, *mīr*, *mallik*, *suratrāhaṇa* (also *suratrāṇ*) and a variety of ethnic terms.

Further, the detailed descriptions of the battle, including names of specific generals, the variety of ethnic groups in the Muslim army, as well as their other activities, such as, the collective act of praying or *namāj* just before going into battle, also mark it out as an early example of the literary tradition of compositions in Old Gujarati that were to deal with similar themes. For instance, the *Kānhaḍade Prabandha* (Biography of Kānhaḍade) by the Nāgar Brahmin poet, Padmanābha, which was composed somewhat later than the RC (around c. 1455), is the story of a Cauhān chieftain's encounter with 'Alā' al-Dīn in Jalor (southern Rajasthan) while the latter was on his way to conquer Gujarat. Much longer than the RC, the *Kānhaḍade Prabandha* also displays a similar affinity for Persianised words, intricate detail including lists of weapons of war, types of horses, names of specific people as well as descriptions of the food that was eaten by them.¹⁹

The story of Raṇmall also seems to have been popular in the oral traditions in Gujarat. Raṇmall appears repeatedly in other historical sources from the period. However, we have only one manuscript available of Srīdhara Vyāsa's text, which is located in the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune. The date in the colophon locates it in early decades of the seventeenth century. One possible implication of this lack of manuscript production is the popularity of the tale in the oral traditions. The circulation of the story in the oral landscape may have reduced the necessity for multiple copies. Also, in this period, men like Raṇmall were still struggling to maintain their sovereignty over the lands that they had

¹⁹ See Padmanābha, *Kānhaḍade Prabandha*, K.B. Vyas, ed., (Jaipur: Rājasthān Purātattva Mandir, 1953).

occupied and lacked the resources for extensive cultural patronage. The lack of epigraphic material commissioned by men such as Raṇmall can also perhaps be explained by the same economic and social constraints. Yet, the numerous memorial stones and oral narratives that even now dot the landscape of Gujarat, Kathiawar, and Kutch bear witness to the enduring significance of their presence.²⁰

In its use of multiple languages and details of localised information, the RC exhibits a continuous dialogue between the different literary and cultural resources that were available in the specific regional context. The use of these multiple resources, in turn, reflects the fluctuating and transitory nature of the contemporary political scenario in which chieftains like Raṇmall struggled to assert their authority and establish their identity.

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Sometime in the year 1394, Zāfar Khān, the new governor appointed by the Delhi Sultan to the province of Gujarat, launched an attack on the hill fort of Idar.²¹ Idar was located close to Anhilvada Patan, the headquarters of the Delhi Sultans in Gujarat. Raṇmall, who was the ruler of the fort, had challenged the new Khān's claims to authority and had refused to pay the customary tribute owed to the representative from Delhi.

Only a few years before this attack, in 1391, Sultan Muḥammad Tughluq II of Delhi (r. 1391-1393) had appointed Zāfar Khān, the son of a respected nobleman of

²⁰ For a detailed description and discussion of memorial stones as an important element of Gujarat's warrior ethos see S. Swayam, "Sites of Ritual Construction of Identities: A Fresh Look at Memorial Stones of Gujarat," *Man in India*, 84, 3 & 4 (2004): 303-339.

²¹ Sikandar b. Muhammad, Manjhu Gujarati, *Mirati Sikandari*. Translated by Fazlullah Lutfullah Faridi (Dharampur: Education Society's Press, 1990), p. 6.

the court named, Wajīh al-Mulk, to quell a rebellion that was brewing in the capital, Anhilvada Patan. Farhat al-Mulk Rasti Khān (c. 1376-1391), the governor of the province had been appointed by Muhammad's predecessor, Sultan Fīrūz Tughluq (1351-1388). Rasti Khān had governed the province successfully and his hold over it had grown progressively due to the control that he had over the local Hindu warrior chieftains. The sultanate sources go as far as saying that he had gained their support.

Thus after the death of his patron, Fīrūz Shāh, Rasti Khān had gradually begun to assert his independence over the province. Both Ali Muhammad Khān, the author of the *Mirat-i-Aḥmadi*, an early eighteenth century Persian work on Gujarat, and Ferishta describe how the nobles of the province complained to the Sultan about the tyranny of his administration. Ferishta, in fact, maintains that Rasti Khān encouraged rebellion against Delhi among the chieftains and promoted idol worship.²² His success in the region thus posed a threat to the authority in Delhi as well as to the local Muslim nobles and the Sultan decided to send another powerful man from his court to put an end to Rasti Khān's insubordination.

Ẓafar Khān won the battle against Rasti Khān and his allies and took over as the governor of Gujarat, with its capital in Anhilvada Patan. Yet, his task was not over. To maintain his hold over the region he had to bring the areas surrounding the capital under his control. His governorship was challenged, right from the beginning, by chieftains like Raṇmall who refused to accept his authority and pay

²² John Briggs, trans, *History of the Rise of Mahomedan Power in India Till the Year AD 1612, Translated from the Original Persian of Mahomed Kasim Ferishta*, vol. IV (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1981 [1829]), p. 1.

tribute. Raṇmall and others like him, were the very chieftains his predecessor Rasti Khān had apparently turned into allies in order to govern the province successfully. It was the subjugation of these men and their claims over the areas that they controlled which eventually led to the consolidation of the rule of Ṣafar Khān and his successors as independent sultans of Gujarat. The story of Ṣafar Khān's encounter with this Rāṭhod chieftain can be said fairly to encapsulate the struggles and process by which chieftains in Gujarat sought to secure their positions in the politics and society of the region in the early stages of their encounters with the new polity of the regional sultans.

RAṆMALL'S CAREER IN HISTORY

Raṇmall Rāṭhod of Idar was one of Ṣafar Khān's earliest adversaries among the locally powerful chieftains of the region. The mountainous region of Idar is located in the Sabarkantha district of present-day Gujarat and connects the chains of the Vindhya and Aravalli ranges. Its ruler, *rā* or *rājā* Raṇmall appears on many occasions in the chief Persian sources on the region, namely, the *Mirat-i Sikandari*, the *Mirat-i Aḥmadi*, and also in the work of Mohammad Kasim Ferishta, who wrote of the various Muslim dynasties of India.

Raṇmall's story, as I have noted, is significant because to a large extent it represents the stories of the variety of warrior chieftains who controlled lands all over Gujarat, Kutch, and Kathiawar. The task of tracing his career from the available sources, however, is somewhat difficult. This is mainly because of the nature of the sources themselves. Persian historical chronicles like the *mirats* and Ferishta's *Tārīkh* contain important scraps of information about the Rāṭhod chieftain. These often tend to be coloured by their own inclination to highlight the victory of Islam over the lands of the 'infidels', but studied in conjunction with one

another and the other sources from the region, they prove invaluable for illuminating aspects of an otherwise obscure chieftain's career.

The *Mirat-i-Sikandari*, by Sikandar Muḥammad mentions at least three encounters between Ṣafar Khān and the Rāṭhods of Idar under Raṇmall.²³ The RC also speaks of previous encounters between the two. Whatever the actual number may have been, there appears to be some truth in the fact that the hill fort of Idar, due to its strategic position at the intersection of the routes that led from Gujarat to southern Rajasthan as well as Malwa, was one of the first forts to be targeted by the early sultans of Gujarat. As the controller of this significant location, Raṇmall appears to hold an important position in the politics of region.

In the same work, not only does Raṇmall appear as the very first of the 'infidel' *rājās* to have rebelled against the new governor, but also as a chieftain who often took advantage of the political dissensions at Anhilvada Patan to secure his own position. Sikandar mentions that shortly after Ṣafar Khān had conquered Patan, he was given the news that the *rājā* of Idar had rebelled.²⁴ An army was thus commissioned to besiege the fort and to plunder and harass its inhabitants. Finally, the Raṇmall accepted defeat and made submission. Again, in 1397-98, Ṣafar Khān besieged the fort of Idar to subdue 'the infidels' there.²⁵ But, continues Sikandar, on hearing of Temür's conquests he made peace with the *rājā* and returned to Patan.

²³ Sikandar Muḥammad (also Sikandar Manju Gujarati) was the son of an official who served the Mughal emperor, Humayun, as a librarian. He accompanied the Emperor in his campaign against Gujarat in the latter half of the sixteenth century and continued to live there after his master's departure. Very little is known about the life of his son (and the author of the *Mirat*), Sikandar, whose account of the history of the region remains an invaluable source, written very soon after the fall of the Muẓaffarshāhī sultans in 1572. See Z.A. Desai, "Mir'at-i-Sikandarī as a Source For the Study of Cultural and Social Conditions of Gujarat under the Sultanate (1403-1572)," *JOI*, X (1960-61): 235-278.

²⁴ Sikandar, *MS*, trans, p.6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Finally, it was when his grandson Aḥmad Shāh came to the throne in c. 1411 that the rulers of Patan once again encountered Raṇmall. Aḥmad's title was disputed by his cousin Fīrūz Khān, who proclaimed himself king at Bharuch. The new sultan temporarily suppressed the rebellion; but not much later, in 1412, Fīrūz Khān and his supporters joined Raṇmall and took shelter in the Idar fort. The confederacy was soon besieged by Aḥmad Shāh and on realising that the Sultan had gained the upper hand, the *rājā*, not only submitted Fīrūz Khān's horses and elephants to him but also plundered his former ally's camp. The Idar chieftain was thus let off on the payment of a suitable tribute.²⁶ However, later in the same account, we once again find Raṇmall forming a confederacy with other chieftains, namely, Trimbakdās of Champaner, Siri of Nāndod (in Rājpipla, Rewa Kantha district) and a certain Punjā along with other rebels from Aḥmad's court, in an abortive attempt to invite Hoshang Shāh of Malwa to usurp the throne of Ahmedabad.

Raṇmall also appears a few times in Ferishta's account of Zafar Khān's early years in the region. In this account too, he seems to alternate between making trouble and offering his submission to the great power. The chieftain finally sent his son to offer submission. Forgiveness, according to Ferishta, was granted on the payment of a large sum of money and jewels.

Like Sikandar, Ferishta also mentions that around the year 1398 Zafar Shah suspended his attack on Idar due to the arrival of Temür's army but resumed it later in the year. However, he adds that this was also a period when Delhi was in a state of confusion and many rivals were contending for the crown.²⁷ Zafar Khān and his son Tatar Khān at this time chose not to participate in this competition but

²⁶ Sikandar, *MS*, trans, pp. 12-13. Also see Briggs, *Ferishta*, pp. 6-21.

²⁷ Briggs, *Ferishta*, pp. 4-5.

instead concentrated on stabilising their hold over Patan. Once again, in 1401, therefore, Zafar Khān attacked Idar to levy tribute, but Raṇmall fled Vishalnagar leaving the fort to be occupied by the governor's forces. Finally, Ferishta gives a rather elaborate account of his alliance with Aḥmad Shah's cousin Fīrūz, who had promised the Rāṭhoḍ chieftain independence in exchange for his help with men and horses in his campaign. Despite being able to hold out against Aḥmad's forces by taking refuge in the hills, Raṇmall finally abandoned his allies and submitted to the sultan. In fact, notes Ferishta, he seized Fīrūz Khān's horses, elephants, and other effects and sent them to the Sultan in order to win his favours.²⁸

The Persian histories of the region thus reflect how a chieftain such as Raṇmall was able to actively participate in the politics of the region. His strategic location and military resources allowed him to form alliances with the sultan's adversaries when it was possible for him to assert his independence. Yet, when the alliance proved less conducive, he was also able to seek the imperial power's forgiveness and maintain peace at the cost of a temporary submission.

In the nineteenth century, Alexander Forbes recorded the legend about the Rāṭhoḍ incursion into Idar and the formation of the town under Rāo Sonugjee, one of one of Raṇmall's Rāṭhoḍ ancestors. According to this narrative, Sonugjee had wrested Idar from its tyrannical ruler, a 'Pūreehār Rajpoot.' The latter's Brahmin minister, betrayed his master and invited Sonugjee to establish his line of Rāṭhoḍs there. This was some time at the end of the Cāvḍā rule in Anhilvada sometime in the late thirteenth century.²⁹ Raṇmall expanded the territories of his father,

²⁸ Ibid., p. 9.

²⁹ Alexander Kinloch Forbes, *Ras Mala; Hindoo Annals of the Province of Goozerat in Western India. Edited with Historical Notes and Appendices by H.G. Rawlinson*, vol. 1 (Delhi: Low Price Publication, 1997 [1924]), p. 235 and pp. 233-237.

Burhutjee and made vassals of men from the Solanki and Cauhan families (presumably because their influence was now on the decline).³⁰ Forbes's version of Raṇmall's encounter with Muḏaffar Shāh, however, seems to be based on Sikandar and Ferishta's account of the same, and need not be repeated here. In 1924, Raṇmall did find a place among the greats of the Rāṭhoḍ clan in a Gujarati language history commissioned by the State of Idar. The author of this monograph, however, simply replicated Forbes's version of the Raṇmall story in his account of his patrons' ancestors.³¹

These different accounts of Raṇmall's career give a varied picture of how he was perceived by writers other than his panegyrist, Śrīdhara Vyāsa. They also give a sense of how men like him harnessed their abilities to obey and disobey the imperial authority in order to hold on to their own sovereign rights. The common strand that runs through these accounts and Śrīdhara Vyāsa's narrative, as will be visible in the following sections, appears to be Raṇmall's desperate resistance to the integration of his territories into the scope of the new imperial authority.

RAṆMALL'S WORLD: A POET'S VISION

Though it is framed in somewhat different terms from the Persian narratives discussed above, Śrīdhara Vyāsa's account of Raṇmall's struggle against the sultan's forces reflects an acute awareness of the region's political history. The narrative interacts closely with its context and reflects the early tensions and negotiations that were a part of the emergence of the new political authority in the region. The

³⁰ Forbes, *Rās Mālā*, vol. 1, p. 300.

³¹ See Jogidas A. Joshi, *Idar Rājyano Itihās* (History of the Idar State), vol. 1 (Himmatnagar, 1924).

newly emerging martial ethos among the chieftains was also framed against these very tensions and negotiations.

As noted in the previous chapter, Samira Sheikh has demonstrated how from the Caulukya period, the agrarian frontier of the entire region of Gujarat, Kathiawar, and Kutch was expanding.³² Access to open cultivable lands and stable pastures allowed itinerant communities to sedentarise. This also promoted state formation and the development of complex economic relations. With agriculture becoming more common in the region, land naturally became a coveted resource.

Sumit Guha has also discussed how, in the region of Baglan, while there were a number of peripatetic communities, the expansion of agriculture and pastoral lands also made land an important resource.³³ This gave rise to complex economies of consumption, production, and interdependence. In order for these economies to flourish, the agrarian regimes in turn needed access to the trade of the Indian Ocean in the important ports in the region such as Bharuch, Cambay, and Surat. The need for access to these required the maintenance of transit through mountain and forest passes of areas such as Idar. As Guha further points out, if these forested hills were an obstacle from one point of view, they were a resource from another: they could be strongholds, bases, and posts, and in their recesses grew the timbers needed for mansions and ships.³⁴

Idar, it will be recalled, was also located on the borders of the kingdoms of southern Rajasthan and Malwa and lay close to the frontiers of Patan, the headquarters of the Delhi Sultans in Gujarat and later, the capital of the

³² See Sheikh, *State and Society*.

³³ Sumit Guha, *Environment and Ethnicity in India 1200-1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 62-63.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

independent sultanate before the founding of Ahmedabad. Its position at the intersection of a number of important trade routes is likely to have created opportunities for profit-making through toll collection. Thus, in the period under study control over these resources of the hilly area of Idar would have been important for the ambitious Delhi governor in maintaining a hold over Gujarat. For Raṇmall (and other similar chieftains like him who controlled similar areas), his control over his hill fort would have been the basis of his prosperity and authority.

Śrīdhara Vyāsa's narrative articulates this aspect of the conflict from the beginning. Raṇmall has captured the grain and wealth from the sultan's coffers in the course of a massive raid. This, along with repeated references to Raṇmall's defiance of the imperial authority form the principal motifs in the text. The raid (*dhāḍ*) on the sultanate treasury is described as having caused much mayhem in the sultanate domains. The poet notes,

In the night the city of Khambhāt [Cambay] trembles, at dawn
confusion prevails in Dholkā,
In the morning helpless cries resound in Pātaṇ, O Raṇmall on hearing
of your raid.³⁵
For the poet, the wealth captured by the Rāṭhoḍ chieftain belongs
rightfully to him.
For the sultan's commander (*mīr*) Rājāṇī of Moḍāsā, the wealth has
been laid waste (*harām*),
You, O Raṇmall, are the only Kshatriya (*khitti*) to have legitimised [lit.
"made *halāl*"] this treasure (*māl*) [that had been] submitted before the
Khān.³⁶

Raṇmall, as we know, does not accept the sultan's authority nor obey the imperial *firmāns*. Thus the governor of Patan decides to launch a mighty attack on the Idar. He instructs his commanders to gather elephants and horses and ransack the fort its surrounding territories. They set off with elaborate militarily paraphernalia,

³⁵ RC, verse 14, p. 157.

³⁶ Ibid., verse 15.

including banners and noisy trumpets to besiege the rebel's territory. On nearing the fort, however, the commander decides to give the chieftain a second chance. He instructs his messenger, Hejab, to climb the fortress of Idar immediately and address Raṇmall thus,

Respect the sultan's *firman*, immediately handover the wealth of the treasury (*dīwānīya*),
Else, give up your lands (*garās*) and servants (*dās*), and accept the Khān's service (*cākari*) with folded hands.³⁷

It is this surrender of the *garas* (from the Sanskrit, *grās* or mouthful) or patrimonies that became the key aspect of the struggle between the new sultans and the chieftains.

A rich body of scholarship now exists on various aspects of state and identity-formation among locally dominant chieftains in pre-modern India.³⁸ In Rajasthan, Gujarat and other parts of central and northern India these men chose the open ended *jāti* status of 'Rajput' for themselves as they gained social and political ascendancy. The recent scholarship on the Rajputs provides particularly useful methodological insights for the study of these men using historical narratives that can be located within their own literary traditions (though there is still virtually no similar work on Gujarat). Of these, as I have already noted (see

³⁷ Ibid., verse 28, p. 159.

³⁸ See for example, Norman P. Ziegler, "Marwari Historical Chronicles: Sources for the Social and Cultural History of Rajasthan," *IESHR*, 13, 2, (1976): 219-250 and "Some Notes on Rājput Loyalties During the Mughal Period," in Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, eds, *The Mughal State 1526-1750*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2003 [1998], pp. 168-210. Also Ramya Sreenivasan, "Alauddin Khalji Remembered: Conquest, Gender and Community in Medieval Rajput Narratives," *SH*, ns. 18.2 (2002): 275-296, *Gender, Literature, History: The Transmission of the Padmini Story*, unpublished PhD. Thesis (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2002), The 'Marriage' of 'Hindu' and 'Turak': Medieval Rajput Histories of Jalor," *MHJ*, 7, 1 (2004): 87-108, Alf Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking India's Oral Epics. Draupadī among Rajputs, Muslims and Dalits* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1999).

Introduction), Dirk Kolff's formulations on the emergence of a military labour market in pre-Mughal Hindustan are extremely useful in understanding the rather fluid category of 'Rajput' warriors, particularly in the regional kingdoms of pre-Mughal India. However, Kolff's analysis places less emphasis on the significance of land as a resource and driving force for these groups, than is visible, at least in the context of medieval Gujarat. With no genealogy or direct familial link with a prestigious ancestor, Raṇmall's social and political prestige is derived from his ability to hold on to the crucial resources that are yielded by his lands.

In his battle with the officials of the Delhi Sultanate, Raṇmall remains steadfast in his decision to fight for his rights over his territories. He would rather confront the enemy than offer them submission.

Resting his strong arms on his sword, (Raṇmall) obstinately addressed Hejam with these challenging words: on the day that my head bends so low as to touch the feet of the *mleccha*, the sun will certainly not rise.³⁹

So long as the sun continues to shine in the sky, the shoulders of *kamadhajja* (Rāṭhor) will not stoop before the enemy,
The flames of the fierce *vaḍvānal* [sub-marine fire] may get pacified,
yet I will not yield *even a furrow* of land to the *mleccha*.⁴⁰

He asks the messenger to remind the Khān that in the past he has won against many other sultanate commanders and nothing would prevent him this time too to destroy the seventeen thousand strong army sent by him. Thus, backed by his past achievements, Raṇmall reiterates his defiance in the following words,

Do not provoke me to a fight, O Malik, I am the annihilator of the *mlecchas* in war,
When I rise to battle, even the Sultan means nothing to me.⁴¹

³⁹ RC, verse 29, p. 150.

⁴⁰ Ibid., verse 30, emphasis mine.

⁴¹ Ibid., verse 34.

In the battle that ensues, while the *yavanas* destroy the administration (*sāsan*) of hill fort and create havoc, the chieftain slaughters several of their soldiers.⁴² Many lose their heads while others simply run away, leaving their belongings behind.⁴³ The mighty *yavana* warriors, who had once rushed to fight the chieftain now grow pale at his sight.⁴⁴ The victory is finally Raṇmall's as the Sultan's forces accept defeat, literary "stuffing grass into their mouths (*mūhe ghāsghalliya*)."⁴⁵

Thus, in Śrīdhara Vyāsa's account, Raṇmall retains his independence and chooses not to accept the Khān's service. In this, the poet differs considerably from the Persian narratives of the encounter, in which Raṇmall adapts more freely to the situation that is most advantageous and accepts the Sultan's authority when conducive to the safety of his lands and possessions. Both instances, however, illuminate how his resources, grains, and wealth or soldiers (as reflected in the Persian accounts) make him a significant adversary of the imperial power consolidating its position in the region.

After he has destroyed the army of the *yavanas* or *mlecchas*, Raṇmall, in the very last verse of the composition, appears to be contemplating the options that lie before him. He says,

Should I raid the fortress of Dhār and free them on extracting tribute?
 With a sword in hand should I destroy the enemy soldiers surrounding
 the *kasava* [a market town, such as the Persian *kasbah*?]
 Should I strike the town of Bharuch (*bhaḍauca*) with the strength of
 my spear and crush it with terror?
 Should I capture the umbrella (*chatra*) of the *asura* [referring to the
 Islamic king's authority] and establish it over my own head?
 Should I enter Patan at dawn and annihilate the *dhagaḍas* [Muslims]
 there?

⁴² Ibid., verse 44, p. 160.

⁴³ Ibid., verse 45.

⁴⁴ Ibid., verse 66, p. 163.

⁴⁵ Ibid., verse 69.

Raṇmall, the *rā* of Idar says, should I create a single umbrella [*ek chatra*, one kingdom under his own ruler] under the sun.⁴⁶

In Śrīdhara Vyāsa's text, his protagonist has the resources to capture the powerful fortress of Dhār in Malwa, the prosperous port town of Bharuch, and Patan, the centre of Delhi's authority in Gujarat. In addition to this, Raṇmall also claims he can take over the authority (represented by the umbrella or *chatra*) of the Sultan and destroy his power by killing his men. In fact, he goes so far as to imply that he can create one overarching kingdom with himself as its head. Śrīdhara Vyāsa does not say more about any of these tantalising prospects. We have no other accounts of Raṇmall's actual attempts at taking over the lands of the Delhi Sultanate. Despite his lofty claims then, Raṇmall remains the hero of a local tradition and in fact a local chieftain who draws back from seeking a more extensive political domain.

THE KSHATRIYA ETHOS OF WARFARE

As I have noted, with the emergence of the new regional sultanates, the fifteenth century witnessed the continuation of an ongoing socio-political process that appears to have been at work in the subcontinent in varying degrees from the seventh century. This was the process in which caste formation converged with the political processes of state formation as diverse groups came to seek Kshatriya status and therefore a place in the larger *varṇa* hierarchy.⁴⁷ In the region comprising Sindh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and central India, this process took the form of 'Rajputisation'. Here, some different social groups came to acquire certain common martial characteristics that can loosely be termed as the 'Rajput tradition'

⁴⁶ Ibid., verse 70.

⁴⁷ B.D. Chattopadhyaya, "Origin of the Rajputs," in *Making*, pp. 57- 88.

or an 'ideal code of conduct.' Whether it was the mercenary warrior at one end of the continuum that Kolff has discussed or the more elite prince, this code of conduct held martial values such as valour and chivalry, loyalty to one's clan and to one's master, keeping one's word, and preference for death over dishonour as its keystones.

Ideas of ideal Kshatriya kingly norms drawn often from the older Puranic tradition of the kind that are visible in the Caulukya inscriptions also became integrated into this newly emerging martial tradition. In Gujarat, at the turn of the fourteenth century, regional and imperial hierarchies were undergoing flux. The characteristic of the martial ethos that was to shape Rajput-hood in a somewhat later period were thus also in a transitional stage, rather than being fully evolved. In the story of Raṇmall, Śrīdhara Vyāsa therefore draws on a number of conventional and unconventional tropes resulting in a narrative that is something of a bricolage of values and a social identity that may have, in this period, been undergoing several shifts. In this section, I focus on three elements of representation in the RC to demonstrate the mix of elements that went into the making of this local chieftain in the early-fifteenth century Gujarat. These representations include, first, the descriptions of the different elements of the battle that that evoke the imagery of war; second, Raṇmall's persona as the hero of this battle; and, finally, the representations of the forces that he fights in order to establish his fame and superiority over the imperial power.

One of the most striking features of Śrīdhara Vyāsa's narrative is the detailed and gory description of battle and battle scenes. As I have noted, the poet recreates the imagery and sounds of the battle between the two adversaries through the extensive use of alliterative and onomatopoeic figures of speech.

These dominate the narrative and set up a heroic mood, conjuring up a vivid image of the battle scene. Thus,

Long banners flutter endlessly in the sky,
Kettledrums (*bheri*) sound fearfully, the war trumpets (*bhūṅkar*) make
a fearsome sound,
The people rapidly run helter-skelter in all ten directions.
Thus proceeds the *saka* army against the one that shouts *śiva śiva*.⁴⁸

Similarly,

The swift *tokhāra*, *tāra*, *tattāra* horses are harnessed,
With their saddles, they appear as birds spreading their wings in the
wind.⁴⁹

Apart from mention of the types of horses, we are also told that the armies wield dangerous weapons like javelins and spears, and wear a variety of armours.⁵⁰ War elephants also find repeated mention in the account. Such descriptions appear throughout the narrative but the battle-scene becomes even gorier when as Raṇmall prepares to fight the Sultan, referred to in the text as *aspati* (from Sanskrit *aśvapati* or Lord of Horses). Now, the *yoginis* (goddesses associated with the Tantric worship of Śiva, the destroyer) rejoice in anticipation of the soldiers dying in battle; (so that they may drink their blood).

Lakhs of *yoginis* circle the skies distributing the *prasād*, they produce
loud shouts of victory,
They goad him [Raṇmall] on [by saying], rise O brave one,
Rise with your weapons and destroy the evil *mlecchas*.⁵¹

Against this background, the figure of Raṇmall appears to embody the prowess of a variety of warriors, recognised in and around the region. The Sanskrit portion of Śrīdhara Vyāsa's work, for instance, draws on elements from the older

⁴⁸ RC, verse 21, p. 158

⁴⁹ Ibid., verse 25.

⁵⁰ Ibid., verse 69, p. 171.

⁵¹ Ibid., verse 42, p. 160.

inscriptional and poetic traditions. Even though the poet may have included this portion in an attempt to display his own literary skills, it also projects Raṇmall as a multifaceted Kshatriya king, not different from the great kings of the past. Śrīdhara Vyāsa, describes Raṇmall, the warrior chieftain as one

Who destroys the pride of the paramount kings
(*chatrādhīpamadaharta*), (the one who) brings warring armies to heel,
(who) is the holder of valiant glory, that Raṇmall, the supporter of the
earth (*bhūbhartā*) flourishes.⁵²

As the powerful Kshatriya king, he is also a well-rounded personality and a 'builder,' though with a unique style of his own.

Some kings build sacrificial posts (*yūpa*), others erect stepwells
(*vāpikā*) and wells (*kūpa*).
Raṇmalla is the only one (known as) the maker of the tombs (for his
adversaries).⁵³

[He] enjoys the pleasures of dance and drama (*bharatarasa*) with those
who have similar interests, enjoys sexual pleasures (*suratarasa*) when
in the company of women,
With the heroic warriors (*vīra*), he revels in the joys of heroism
(*vīrarasa*), such is the unique [*eka eva*, lit. one and only] Raṇmall.⁵⁴

Thus, while other kings build temples and do charitable works, Raṇmall's achievements lie in his prowess as a warrior. By implication, he earns his spiritual merits by destroying his enemies and constructing their tombs. Yet, the poet does not forget to emphasise that he is also interested in the finer things that make for a king's life.

Further, in his abilities as a warrior he is no less than the great lord Rāma.
The poet writes,

⁵² Ibid., verse 2, p. 156.

⁵³ Ibid., verse 6.

⁵⁴ Ibid., verse 9.

The demons were driven towards *yama's* abode (*yamasadana*) after *sītā's* abduction (*sītāharāṇa*),
Presently, the mighty *kamdhajja* (Raṭhoḍ) takes them there.⁵⁵

Continuing on the theme of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the poet adds in the vernacular portion of his account that in slaying the enemy forces, Raṇmall is in fact recreating the events in the great epic.⁵⁶ However, he also compares his protagonist to Rāma's rival, Rāvaṇa, who is traditionally viewed as an *asura* or demon. He notes, "Excited by war, resembling Rāvaṇa in his zeal for fight, he calls out (to fleeing the enemy saying) stop stop (*rahi rahi*)."⁵⁷

Sheldon Pollock has demonstrated how there has been a long history to the relationship between the *Rāmāyaṇa* and political symbology. The epic, he notes, from an early period supplied, "continuously and readily, if in a highly differentiated way, a repertory of imaginative instruments for articulating a range of political discourses."⁵⁸ However, it was from the twelfth century onwards and particularly in western and central India, that the political imagination broke from its earlier manifestations in the political realm, and from this period onwards, kings were reinvented as Rāma.⁵⁹ The epic, according to Pollock, allowed, on the one hand, the possibility of conceptualising and narrating a historically grounded political order, and, on the other, a fully "demonized Other" could be "categorized, counterposed, and condemned."⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Ibid., verse 3.

⁵⁶ Ibid., verse 58, p. 162.

⁵⁷ Ibid., verse 59.

⁵⁸ Sheldon Pollock, "Rāmāyaṇa and Political imagination in India," *Journal of Asian Studies*, 52, 2 (1993), p. 262.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 263.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 264.

However, in the RC we find a somewhat different representation of this dichotomy. As will be discussed, the Muslims were indeed described as *asuras* or demons. Yet, the representation of the protagonist as Rāvaṇa, an *asura* in the epic tradition, appears to turn the traditional *deva-asura* (god-demon) rivalry on its head. Here, the poet only seems to evoke the demon king's memory in his role as a warrior hero. Just as his opponent, Rāma, Rāvaṇa, too is a great king and fighter and not the demonised Other.

Raṇmall's comparison with the Puranic divinities is also accompanied by comparisons with the historical heroes well known in the region. Thus, according to the poet, after Hammira, the Cauhāṇ chieftain of Ranthabhor, who destroyed the Sultan's (here 'Alā' al-Dīn Khaljī's) armies with alacrity, Raṇmall is the only hero who can now repeat this great act.⁶¹ The vernacular portion of the narrative draws similarly from the pool of locally available historical resources. Just as Hammira, Raṇmall too, single handedly, manifested the valour of the "thirty-six clans (*chattīs kulaha*)."⁶² Further, his fighting technique is also similar to Hammira, who "dashing headlong, decapitated the *dhagaḍas*, causing their heads to roll on the ground."⁶³ Several other references to the achievements of this Cauhāṇ ruler are found in the RC.

Hammira's battle against 'Alā' al-Dīn Khaljī is not the only local memory that the poet recalls to enhance Raṇmall's position in his fight. He speaks of Sātal of Sambhar, a chieftain of a minor branch of the Cauhāṇs named *sonigara*, who was known to have once rescued the idol of Lord Somanatha by attacking the Ghazni

⁶¹ Ibid., verse 4, p. 156.

⁶² Ibid., verse 31, p. 159.

⁶³ Ibid., verse 58, p. 162.

demon (*asuraha gajjāṇavaī*) from all ten directions.⁶⁴ He then reinstated the lord in his proper place. By the fourteenth century, terms derived from the place name Ghazni were used more generically to describe the ruler of Delhi.⁶⁵ In this case, the term *asuraha gajjāṇavaī* most likely referred to 'Alā' al-Dīn, whose campaigns in western India had a lasting impact on the region's historical memory. According to Śrīdhara Vyāsa, Raṇmall granted Sātal (or perhaps his descendents?) a kingdom (*rājī*) as he always honoured those who fought against the Lord of Horses.⁶⁶ As a ruler who was able to make such a grant Raṇmall appears as a superior as well as a benevolent king. The act also allows him to share in the prestige that was associated in medieval western India with the Śaiva temple. It is also worth noting that both Hammīra and Sātal belonged to the Cauhāṇ and not the Rāṭhoḍ lineage. This kind of drawing on the past is a common feature in several texts produced in the local chieftaincies of Gujarat and Rajasthan that had to deal with intense territorial rivalries and frequent military conflicts in this period. Ramya Sreenivasan, in her essay on the narrative traditions that grew around 'Alā' al-Dīn's conquests in central and western India, has noted that from the mid-fifteenth century onwards, newer lineages consolidated their power and established their legitimacy by claiming genealogical (and thereby political) descent from those past lineages whose powers had been destroyed by 'Alā' al-Dīn's campaigns.⁶⁷ The invocation of the memory of these campaigns by the bards and court poets thus

⁶⁴ RC, verse 62, p. 162. The memory of *sonigarā* Sātal also forms a significant part of the *Kānhḍade Prabandha*, where he is represented as an important aid to the protagonist in his battle against the Sultan's attempts at carrying away the idol of Somanatha. See Padmanābha, *Kānhḍade Prabandha*, *khanda* II, pp. 65-98

⁶⁵ B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *Representing the Other? Sanskrit Sources and the Muslims (Eighth to the Fourteenth Centuries)* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1998), p. 30.

⁶⁶ RC, verse 63, p. 162.

⁶⁷ Ramya Sreenivasan, "Alauddin Khalji Remembered," pp. 275-296

became a convenient instrument by which a patrons' legitimacy could be reiterated in politically uncertain times. In the case of the RC we see an early instance of how the local memory of Hammira and his struggle against the Khaljī ruler were linked with Raṇmall's achievements, real or imagined, against the representatives of the sultans.

Interestingly, however, Śrīdhara Vyāsa evokes yet another, perhaps more recent and dramatic event whose memory may have been popular at the time. He compares his protagonist with Temūr, the Mongol chieftain, who had nearly destroyed Delhi just about a hundred years ago. He notes,

Though he overpowered the lord of Delhi (*ḍhillīpati*) with the prowess of his arms (*bāhūbala*), he did not become conceited, In that, Raṇmall, the thorn in the side of the *śaka*, is equal only to the *yama*-like Tamerlane (*timiraliṅga*).⁶⁸

Thus, in bringing together all these different warrior idols and ideals, the poet seems to be building his protagonist's martial personality. Raṇmall draws his prestige from all these different heroes, as he shares some elements of their achievements or personas. However, in his battle against the *yavanas*, Śrīdhara Vyāsa's Kshatriya (*khitri*) hero, remains a solitary fighter, a warrior chieftain defending his status and sovereignty by dint of his personal prowess.

The descriptions of the sultanate officials as well as their armies also play an important role in the manner in which Śrīdhara Vyāsa builds the personality of his martial hero. Raṇmall is fighting his battle against no small army. Compared to the numerous mentions of the "seventeen thousand strong army" of the *yavanas*, his army is also only mentioned once throughout the narrative. The fighters who make up this vast army are commanded by men of authority who can issue *firmāns*

⁶⁸ Ibid., verse 5, p. 156.

(from the Persian *firmān*, royal order) and expect submission based on the strength of their arms, horses, and elephants. The commander of the sultanate forces is in fact described as *śarakesari* (*śūrakesari*), or best among brave warriors, who on hearing of Raṇmall's insubordination immediately gave orders to beat the drums announcing a war.⁶⁹ These men and their armies are feared all over the lands surrounding Idar.

The loud, horse-faced (*āsamukha*) fighters are courageous,
They are harsh (*kaṭhor*), pillaging fierce *pārasīkas* [Persians],
They plunder entire villages, capture women, children, and cows,
The men look on as the *mecchas* (*mleccha*) carry them away.⁷⁰

Thus, Raṇmall's rivals are brave and fierce themselves. This characterisation further highlights the protagonist's prowess as he is their annihilator.

It is noteworthy that Śrīdhara Vyāsa does not use the term *musalamāna*, which was well-known during this period but chooses instead to represent those who constitute the sultanate army in a variety of different Sanskritised terms. These include terms like *mleccha*, *asura*, *śaka*, and *yavana* as well as more specifically ethnic terms such as *bagālīya* (Bengali) or *pārasīkas* (Persians). The sultan himself is referred to as *aspati*, derived from the Sanskrit *asvapati* or the Lord of Horses.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Ibid., verse 37, p. 159.

⁷⁰ Ibid., verse 41., p. 160.

⁷¹ Cynthia Talbot finds a similar representation of the ruler of Delhi in her study of Sanskrit inscriptions from medieval Andhra. She concludes that the use of this term in the literature of this period to identify the Turkic rulers was a portrayal of them as one of multiple, not binary, competing groups like the *Gajapatis* or 'Lords of the Elephant Corps' in Orissa or *Narapati* or 'Lords of Men' in Andhra. See Cynthia Talbot, "Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self: Hindu-Muslim Identities in Pre-Colonial India," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 37, 4 (1995), p. 708. B.D. Chattopadhyaya, in a study of inscriptions and literary texts from the eighth to the fourteenth centuries in different parts of the subcontinent, also finds that Muslim rulers are often represented as one of many claimants in situations of intense and constant competition. Even in the socio-religious sphere, Chattopadhyaya finds that the Muslims are represented as one of many ideological components that existed within different local contexts and historical situations. B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *Representing*, p. 58.

In representing the Muslims in these terms, the poet is indeed following the conventions of his times, rather than emphasising the difference between religious groups. Over the past two decades, scholars have revisited a number of early medieval and medieval narratives from different literary and cultural traditions to demonstrate how representations of Muslim were often much less binary and oppositional than they might appear upon superficial reading.⁷² More specifically, within the Sanskrit and vernacular narrative traditions from western India, terms such as *mleccha* were used to denote the Muslims. This term, used extensively in the RC had carried over from the Vedic times where it was used to refer to those who could not speak Sanskrit correctly.⁷³ Later in the epic/Puranic tradition, this term, along with the terms *yavana* and *śaka*, came to be used for those groups of people who entered the subcontinent from the north-west and central Asia and gained considerable amount of political ascendancy. The terms also came to connote a lack of culture and civilisation and was used for the indigenous tribes, apart from the foreigners. In general, these groups were recognised as those who challenged or did not adhere to Brahminical norms. In the early medieval and medieval periods, these terms were revived to designate the Muslims, along with the characterisation of barbarian or 'outsider'.⁷⁴ The Muslims could thus be equated

⁷² See Talbot, "Inscribing," pp. 692-722; Barbara D. Metcalf, Presidential Address: "Too Little Too Much: Reflections on the Muslims in the History of India," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 54, 4, (1995): 951-967; B. D. Chattopadhyaya, *Representing the Other? Sanskrit Sources and the Muslims (8th to 14th centuries)* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1998); Romila Thapar, "The Tyranny of Labels" in *Cultural Pasts: Essays in Early Indian History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 990-1014 and *Somanatha: The Many Voices of History* (New Delhi: Penguin – Viking, 2004).

⁷³ Thapar, "Tyranny," p. 1002.

⁷⁴ Talbot, "Inscribing," p. 698. Also see Chattopadhyaya, *Representing*, p. 30.

with the foreigners and tribal people in relation to their common disregard for Brahmanism.⁷⁵

However, while Śrīdhara Vyāsa makes use of these conventional terms, his account also presents another image of Raṇmall's enemy which seems to contradict the 'inclusive' nature of the terms. He in fact appears to be conscious of a religious difference when he uses the term *hindū* for Raṇmall and *rahemāṇiya* or followers of Rehamana, for some of the Muslim soldiers. An awareness of the intricacies of the enemy's religious and ritual practices are also apparent in the following description of the scene of prayer.

The multicoloured fabrics are spread out, the sound of the call for payers (*baṅg*) fills the atmosphere, the name of god [*ramān* or Rahaman] is remembered,
The soldiers perform namaz (*nimāj*) while the sultanate cavalry stands guard.⁷⁶

These soldiers are also seen to engage in the stock actions associated with the Muslims of capturing Brahmins, women, and children. However, the *yavanas* are not alone in capturing men of religion. The poet notes,

Raṇmall cuts off their [the *yavanas*] heads; with a club he smashes the *mlecchas*,
When he suddenly throws his spear in the battlefield, they flee leaving their swords,
He captures the holy men (*pavittacitta*) and kills their monkey-like commanders (*mīr maṅkaḍā*).⁷⁷

Although we are told that helpless Brahmins and children look to Raṇmall's army for protection,⁷⁸ this act of capturing the holy men indicates that both sides were probably engaging in such deeds. It can perhaps then be suggested that just as the

⁷⁵ Talbot, "Inscribing," p.699.

⁷⁶ RC, verse 49, p. 169.

⁷⁷ Ibid., verse 45.

⁷⁸ Ibid., verse 40, p. 160.

desecration of temples was a political act, the capture of holy men may also have had similar implications and was done by opposing forces alike.⁷⁹

In an essay on the Tamil folk hero, Stuart Blackburn suggests that this is an elite category of heroes that is representative of a courtly class interest.⁸⁰ A similar category of heroes, he suggests, can be found in the medieval literary traditions of the West as well. These are men who are either princes, vassals of kings or have a tendency to marry daughters of kings and serve the interest of the courtly world which they inhabit. In contrast, he introduces another category of heroes, the 'local hero,' who differs from the Puranic model as he represents a different social class interest. The 'local' hero is one who defies the norms of his own class and or caste to serve the interests of those who are poor, down-trodden or socially ostracised.

While Raṇmall does not fit neatly into Blackburn's category of a 'local hero,' he does not find a comfortable place in the classical Puranic ideologies of kingship that were visible in the Caulukya-Vāghelā inscriptions. The difference in the tone and texture between the brief introductory portion of the narrative in Sanskrit and the following verses in the Apabhramsha is significant. Nowhere else in the narrative do we find Raṇmall engaging in the cultural and sensual activities that are alluded to in the preface of Sanskrit verses. He is compared with Rāma but as

⁷⁹ These representations quite differnt to the manner in which the Muslims are depicted the later narrative, *Kānhaḍade Prabandha* by the Nāgar Brahmin poet Padmanabha. This narrative speaks of the battle between Kānhaḍade, the Cauhāṇ chieftain of Jalor and 'Alā al-Dīn Khaljī and contains similar, if more elaborate descriptions of battle scene, horses, and weapons than the RC. Unlike Raṇmall, Kānhaḍade loses to the *yavana* forces due to an act of treachery; the enmity is resolved at another narrative level as the Sultan, we are made aware, is an incarnation of Śiva and his daughter, Pirojā, has in fact been a virtuous Kshatriya woman in many of her previous births.

⁸⁰ Stuart Blackburn, "The Folk Hero and Class Interest in Tamil Heroic Ballads," *Asian Folklore Studies*, 37, 1 (1978): 131-149.

we have seen, he is also a warrior in the likeness of Rāvaṇa and is aided by little other than his own skills and strength in his fight to protect his small territory from the enemy. Similarly, he does not have an elaborate court or a retinue of courtiers. For him, his duty as Kshatriya or *vīra* (brave warrior) lies in single-handedly protecting his territories by not succumbing to the enemy forces.

CONCLUSION

Raṇmall's story as told by Śrīdhara Vyāsa is a literary work. It serves as the inheritance of this warrior chieftain, a legacy that will speak for his achievements centuries after his death. Even in his own times, the poet notes, "The emperor is astounded by *rāi* Raṇmall's reputation spreading around the world."⁸¹ In the absence of the courtly paraphernalia and the support of a massive army, he only has his personal prowess to fall back on. In the literary landscape of fifteenth-century Gujarat, the RC would have served the protagonist's reputation. From today's vantage point, it is also an indicator of his vulnerability. We can imagine him standing alone making the defiant claims of destruction that he does in the final lines of the narrative. Yet, we also know that the scale of the sultanate forces would have been far greater than anything that Raṇmall and others like him would have been able to garner. Sikandar and Ferishta's descriptions of Raṇmall contradict Śrīdhara Vyāsa's construction of him as a solitary fighter. At this stage, the Muslim noblemen of Gujarat saw a valuable resource in men such as Raṇmall in wake of the Delhi Sultanate's authority.

Narratives such as the *Raṇmallacharīda*, interacted closely with the moral and political order of the time. As narratives that were performed and circulated

⁸¹ RC, verse 16, p. 157.

they also in turn informed and affected these political and moral worlds. Thus the *Raṇmallachanda* was not primarily composed as a work of history. Much of it was composed to assert the status and privileges of the protagonist (and to entertain an audience). Śrīdhara Vyāsa's solitary warrior hero, Raṇmall, is aware of his position within the dynamics of the transitional politics of the region. The economic resources he possesses make him an important player in this politics. Yet his position is also vulnerable in the wake of the new Sultan's powerful army.

In this chapter, I have analysed the manner in which the transitional nature of fifteenth-century Gujarat shaped the articulations of the local chieftains' assertions of their own identity and authority. In its use of multiple languages, the narrative displays an awareness of the various literary devices that could be harnessed in order to build the protagonist's martial personality. His ability to single-handedly destroy his enemies is a manifestation of this ability. Yet, a further analysis of the different elements of his Kshatriya persona also demonstrates a multiplicity of values and agendas. Thus, the opposition between him and his enemies, the *yavanas*, is presented in complex terms. Finally, the alliterative and onomatopoeic texture of the narrative, its oral character, as well as the vivid descriptions of battle contribute to the making of Raṇmall's martial world. Thus, in the figure of Raṇmall, what is visible is an intermixture of multiple traditions and values that were to contribute somewhat later to the more coherent elite Rajput identity.

Chapter 3

Defending Sovereignty and Status: The Rhetoric of Kingship in the Local Kingdoms of Gujarat

In the previous chapter, I discussed a local chieftain's attempts at establishing his status and sovereignty in the north Gujarat region in relation to the new imperial authority in Anhilvada Patan in the early-fifteenth century. Raṇmall, the Rāṭhoḍ chieftain of the hill kingdom of Idar, struggled to maintain his hold over his lands by allying himself actively with the new governor's enemies, which, according to the Persian chronicles, included both Muslim as well as non-Muslim elements. In the imagination of his Brahmin panegyrist, Śrīdhar Vyās, he emerged as a hero who 'legitimised' the wealth and land that had been appropriated by the imperial treasury. In this task, he appeared as the lone warrior who was aided by little other than his own military prowess and virtues. As a chieftain, Raṇmall's primary tasks, according to the poet, appeared to be the defence of his fort, lands, and wealth. Neither divine power nor a conventional genealogy linking him to a divine or prestigious ancestor came to his aid.

In this chapter, the focus shifts to a somewhat different literary terrain. Here, I explore the representation and rhetoric of kingship in two Sanskrit narratives produced at the courts of the local chieftains of fifteenth-century Gujarat; one is from Champaner and the other from Saurashtra. Temporally too, I move to a somewhat later period of the mid-fifteenth century, when the authority of the regional sultans was more firmly rooted.¹ These narratives differ

¹ In a recent study on the bilingual inscriptions from Gujarat in the fifteenth century, Samira Sheikh finds that the sultans were increasingly recognised as undisputed overlords even when the

considerably in style, texture, and genre from the RC. Unlike the story of Raṇmall which shares a number of features with the oral traditions, these narratives are rooted in the classical elite courtly *kāvya* literature. Here the protagonists are kings who possess elaborate courts and other regal accoutrements. Their sovereignty and status also depend upon a variety of ritual and religious tasks in addition to simply holding on to their lands, as is the case with Raṇmall.

These narratives are composed by a poet named Gaṅgādhara who, before travelling to the courts of Gujarat, appears to have been patronised by the king Pratāpadevarāya (also known as Devarāya II) of Vijayanagara. Sometime in the mid-fifteenth century, he embarked on a pilgrimage to Dwarka from where he proceeded to Ahmedabad to serve Sultan Muḥammad of Gujarat (c. 1414-1451 CE).² After defeating his rivals at the *gurajar-suratrāṇa*'s (referring to the Gurjara or Gujarati sultan) court he travelled southeast to the kingdom of Champaner which was ruled by the Cauhāṇ king Gaṅgadāsa. Gaṅgādhara speaks of own his movements in a play called *Gaṅgadāsapratāpavilāsanāṭakam* (henceforth *GPVN*) or "the play about the glory and sport of Gaṅgadāsa."³ In this composition, which follows the conventions of classical Sanskrit drama, the poet narrates the Cauhāṇ

effective ruler was a local chieftain or landholder. This overlordship was frequently acknowledged in literary texts and even more regularly in epigraphs. Sheikh lists a number of inscriptions from different parts of the region where by the mid-and-late fifteenth centuries local, non-Muslim lineages also mentioned the name of the ruling sultans in their donations. See Samira Sheikh, "Bilingual Inscriptions", p. 5. In his survey of the Sanskrit epigraphs in Gujarat from the Aśokan times, Rasesh Jamindar makes a similar observation about the Gujarati Sultans' authority being widely accepted in the region from the fifteenth century onwards. See his "Contribution of the Sanskrit epigraphs of Gujarat in the making of national heritage," in *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, 50, 1-4 (2000-2001), p. 202.

² Gaṅgādhara, *Gaṅgadāsapratāpavilāsanāṭakam*, Bhogilal J. Sandesara and A. M. Bhojak, eds (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1973), II, p. 18. I use this version of the text throughout the dissertation.

³ See Ibid., The title can also be translated as "The pleasures of Gaṅgadāsa and Pratāpa (devī)" as the wife of the chieftain was called Pratāpadevī.

king's campaign against and the subsequent victory over the regional Sultan. The other Sanskrit composition discussed in this chapter is a *mahākāvya* or epic poem eulogising the Cuḍāsamā king Māṇḍalika, a work also attributed to Gaṅgādhara. This is the *Māṇḍalikaṇṇpacarita* (henceforth *MNC*). Gaṅgadhara thus appears to have travelled across the region putting his literary skills on offer from court to court, where there was certainly a demand for them.⁴

In this chapter, I analyse the *GPVN* and the *MNC* to explore different aspects of the social and political history of fifteenth-century Gujarat. The analysis is in two parts. First, I focus on how the role of the king is imagined in the local polities of Champaner and Junagadh and on the rhetoric, and ideologies of kingship that these localised kingdoms appear to have sought in this period. Next, I discuss the different levels of political geography and the significance of the 'place' within which the poet situates his patrons and their kingdoms and how this contributes to the making of ideologies of local kingship in the region. My analysis focuses on the interplay between aspirations of universal kingship and the exigencies of localised polities. While the older Puranic models of kingship are evoked, particularly through the use of the elite Sanskrit *kāvya* tradition, they are in fact reconfigured by the social and political realities of local kingdoms of Gujarat. A

⁴ A number of Sanskrit poets from different parts of India appear to have visited Gujarat throughout the course of history. Bilhāṇa, the Kashmiri poet visited Patan sometime in the eleventh century and was patronised by the Caulukya king Karṇa's minister Sampatakara or Sāntu. Here he wrote a *nāṭikā* entitled *Karṇasundarī*. Another poet, Harihara, a Brahmin from Gauḍa-deśa (probably Bengal) was intercepted in his journey to Somanatha at Sthambhatirtha (Cambay) by Vastupāla, who was then the governor of the province. He is said to have composed a play here based on the minister's life called *Śaṅkha-parābhava-vyayoga*. For more information on the works of these and other Sanskrit poets from Gujarat see Govardhan Panchal, "A Glimpse into the Sanskrit and Other forms of Drama in Medieval Gujarat," in *Contribution of Gujarat to Sanskrit Literature*, M.K. Prajapati, Hansa Hindocha, and H.R. Patel, ed. (Patan: Dr. M. I. Prajapati Śaṣṭipūrṭi Sanmāna Samiti, 1998), pp. 293-310.

study of these narratives, along with Udayarāja's *Rājavinoda* in the following chapter, also provides an insight into the meanings of use of Sanskrit for the production of courtly texts in a regional context, where the option of using a number of other languages may have existed to serve a similar purpose of promulgating and transmitting the chieftains' authority and establishing their status.

As I noted in the first chapter, Sheldon Pollock has shown how from the first millennium of the current era there developed a mutually constitutive relationship between the aestheticised *kāvya* poetry in Sanskrit and political power. This form of poetry was to be composed only in Sanskrit or the other two cosmopolitan languages, Prakrit and Apabhramsha. During this period, in South Asia and Southeast Asia, the vernaculars held a secondary place at least in the elite realm of the royal court and the assertion of political power. Hence, in the royal grants, usually accompanied by a eulogy or *praśasti*, the quotidian administrative aspects were inscribed in the vernacular. However, Pollock further goes on to demonstrate how from c. 1000 CE onwards this form of literary production in Sanskrit was reconfigured and replaced by the variety of vernacular literary traditions that emerged in these regions. From this period onwards, he contends, elite literati consciously chose to compose in the vernacular languages and "thereby began to redefine, in the most practical terms, the relationship between culture and power."⁵ While, according to Pollock, the actual nature and functioning of vernacular polities remains a topic for future research,⁶ he suggests that political aspiration was now restricted to the local-regional domain as

⁵ Pollock, *Language*, p. 415.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.423.

expressed in the regional languages. Spectacular claims of conquest over distant lands were still occasionally made in inscriptions and literary texts, but these were truly symbolic rather than representative of any real aspiration of universal dominion.⁷ Real political power and aspirations to it now had narrower geographical and cultural claims. “Power, like language and literary culture, was no longer cosmic or universal, but sharply de-fined and firmly em-placed.”⁸

While Pollock’s formulations are important, his binary division between Sanskrit and the vernaculars appears somewhat schematic and neat. In a recent study of Sanskrit inscriptions from Southeast Asia in the first millennium, Daud Ali has demonstrated that inscriptions from this region do not reflect the kind of dichotomy and Sanskrit, in fact, is often used to inscribe the day-to-day aspects of the administration.⁹ Significantly, Ali also points to the variety of functions that the language served. Differing from South Asia, the Southeast Asian inscriptions also reveal that they were not always intended to be grants of land but could also serve other needs of political power, by for instance acting as charters of rule. In addition to this, according to Ali’s study, the use of the cosmopolitan Sanskrit did not “efface the local” but rather “stimulated it.”¹⁰ Thus, Ali suggests that Sanskrit, as a discursive practice, did not have a single set of meanings in any given context, but, in fact allowed the possibility of multiple implications within the specificities of that context.

⁷ Ibid., p. 419.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Daud Ali, “Early Inscriptions of Indonesia and the Problem of the Sanskrit Cosmopolis,” in P. Manguin and A. Mani, eds. *Early Indian Influences in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: ISEAS Press, 2009), pp. 1-30.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 22.

Similarly, Sumit Guha has pointed out that Pollock's formulation of the vernaculars gradually replacing the more transcultural Sanskrit implies that the process was somehow irreversible.¹¹ Focusing on the Dakhan between 1500 and 1800, Guha suggests in fact the choice of language used in various contexts was related to power and, more significantly, these hierarchies of power were subject to change. Thus, it was under the Yadavas of Devagiri (thirteenth century) that the Marathi language reached the highest point of efflorescence and continued to flourish under the Bahamani and Nizam Shāhi rules that followed.¹² However, in this part of western India, Dakhani also emerged as marker of a regional religious identity and also of an urban elite culture. Thus, the literature of the period demonstrates a tension between the two languages and at the same time the then current form of Marathi shows the influence of several Persian loan words. Guha also discusses the multilingual *Rādhāmādhavavilāsacampu*, a seventeenth century text that not only displays the literary feats of its composer, Jayaram Pindye but also demonstrates the polyglot atmosphere of the period.¹³ The Dakhan, however, also witnessed the resurgence of Sanskrit as a marker of political power in the 1500 to 1800 period. Under Sivājī and his son Sambhājī, and later Rājārām, Sanskrit was associated with the end of *mleccha* rule and new prominence was given to Sanskritic words in official documents even though Marathi remained the official language.¹⁴

¹¹ Sumit Guha, "Transitions and Translations: Regional Power and the Vernacular Identity in the Dakhan, 1500-1800," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 24, 2 (2004), p. 23.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

In his analysis of the role and function of Sanskrit, Pollock does not sufficiently address the issue of the existence of number of Sanskrit texts originating in the contexts of the regional courts of South Asia in the post-1000 era. The *GPVN* and *MNC*, as well as Udairāja's *Rājavinoda* discussed in the following chapter, are important examples of Sanskrit literary production in regional kingdoms and can further be located within the wider milieu of Sanskrit use in the second millennium.

In Gujarat, apart from the chieftains' and sultanate courts, Sanskrit seems to have been in use in other social and religious contexts as well. The *prabandha* genre of biographies of real and mythological exemplars, such as munificent merchants or divine and earthly kings, continued to be written and circulated in the region throughout the medieval period.¹⁵ Most of these *prabandhas* were composed in a Sanskrit that interacted closely with the regional language.

In his work on the literature of the Śvetāmbaras of Gujarat, Johannes Hertel elaborates on the idea of the continued existence of a spoken or vernacular Sanskrit in Gujarat, which differed from the strict rules of the grammarians, but which was widely prevalent in different parts of India.¹⁶ Further, he cites evidence from Bilhāṇa suggesting that a considerable portion of the population of the Gujarat region, including women, spoke both Sanskrit and Prakrit. The Śvetāmbaras of Gujarat certainly used a form of colloquial Sanskrit in their stories

¹⁵ The manuscript of the *Damayantikathā* composed in Ahmedabad, sometime in the mid-fifteenth century by a Jain scholar who claimed to be a disciple of Somendra Sūri, housed at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, is one of many such surviving texts. Similarly, the Bodleian also houses the *Dvārakāmahātmya*, composed around c. 1451. Composed at Ranpur, this version of the *Dvārakāmahātmya* acknowledges the reign of Sultan Quṭb al-Dīn (1451-1458). See A.B. Keith, *Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), p. 27.

¹⁶ Johannes Hertel, *On the Literature of the Shvetambaras of Gujarat* (Leipzig: Sächsische Forschungsinstitute, 1922), p. 22.

in order to make it intelligible to the public. According to Hertel, Gujarati words were extensively adapted into Sanskrit and became the common property of the Sanskrit writers of Gujarat. He cites a number of Sanskrit works dating from 1600 CE onwards in which the words have been amalgamated with, or modified by, Gujarati words. Hence, he contends, a certain knowledge of Gujarati is absolutely necessary for every scholar who wishes to read Sanskrit works written in Gujarat.¹⁷

The fact that the Sultan at Ahmedabad was also a patron of Sanskrit scholarship (as Gaṅgādhara mentions while describing his travels and as will be visible in the following chapter) may also be one indicator of the wide use of Sanskrit in the region. Further, Sanskrit inscriptions, including a vast number of *praśastis*, were widely patronised in Gujarat in the fifteenth century. It is also noteworthy that both the sultans and other prominent people of the region, including merchants, courtiers, and women, patronised the production of inscriptions in Sanskrit as well as in other languages. Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit and versions of Gujarati were all used for monumental inscriptions in the fifteenth century; many were bilingual or even trilingual and well-known poets and writers were employed to write these.¹⁸ This range of languages was also indicative of a variety of patrons as well as of the variety of spaces in which they were patronised.¹⁹ In addition to these languages, by the time Gaṅgādhara travelled to Gujarat, *Gujari*, a mixture of Gujarati and Hindustani had also come to be associated with the Gujarati sultanate court and was extensively patronised by the

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 23. Hertel's findings are also cited in Madhav Deshpande, *Sanskrit and Prakrit: Sociolinguistic Issues* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1993), pp. 38-39.

¹⁸ Sheikh, "Bilingual Inscriptions," p. 1.

¹⁹ Ibid.

rulers. Thus, a number of language options seem to have been available to poets and patrons. Gaṅgādhara himself claims to have been the master of six languages, though he does not tell us which ones these are.

Gaṅgādhara's choice of Sanskrit in the local courts of Gujarat was perhaps also driven by the fact that he was not originally from the region, but had travelled to Dwarka, Junagadh, Ahmedabad, and Champaner from Vijayanagara. Yet, the significant fact here seems to be that in all these courts he was able to display his skills as a poet who composed in Sanskrit. This implies that his abilities in Sanskrit were of particular value in courts that had the choice of patronising the vernacular languages that had become, according to Pollock, representative of their regional powers. It is worthwhile then to analyse Gaṅgādhara's narratives in some detail to understand how his choice of language related to his imagination of the regional kings and kingdoms that he wrote about. Before moving on to this analysis, in the following section, I present a brief summary of the plots of both the narratives under study.

THE NARRATIVES

Gaṅgadāsapratāpavilāsanāṭakam

The only existing manuscript of the *GPVN* is to be found at the British Library in London.²⁰ It also seems to be missing a few pages, and also lacks a colophon giving

²⁰ No traditional commentaries on the text have yet been discovered. The text has also never been translated, although B.J. Sandesara has discussed some portions of it. See, for instance, B.J. Sandesara, "Gaṅgadāsapratāpavilāsa by Gaṅgādhara, A Historical Sanskrit Play Depicting the Conflict Between Sultān Muhammad II of Ahmedabad and the King Gaṅgadāsa of Chāmpāner," *JOI*, IV (1953-54): 193-204; "Detailed Description of the Fort of Chāmpāner in the Gaṅgadāsapratāpavilāsa, an Unpublished Sanskrit Play by Gaṅgādhara," *JOI*, XVII (1968-69): 45-50. Sandesara subsequently edited the play, which was published by the Oriental Institute in 1973.

the exact date and place of production. It only tells us, "this book belongs to the excellent Vaidya Bhāmāji (*vaidyavaraśrībhāmājīmahattamānam pustakamidam*)."²¹ On the basis of the script used, its editor has suggested that it may have been copied from an earlier manuscript sometime in the sixteenth century.²² The original play, on the other hand, is believed to have been composed much closer to the actual historical event in 1449 CE, possibly between c. 1450 and 1460. The likelihood of this dating being accurate is high as the years of Gaṅgādhara's Vijayanagara patron, Pratāpadevarāya's reign is from the c. 1426 to CE 1447 CE. The fortunes of the Vijayanagara Empire seem to have been on a decline for almost half a century after this period and it is possible that the poet left this court in search of better prospects in other parts of the subcontinent.

The GPN is a nine act play composed primarily in Sanskrit. It makes use of both prose and poetry. The Sanskrit is interspersed with a form of Prakrit,²³ used traditionally in Sanskrit/classical drama by the *vidūṣaka* or the jester and the female characters. In addition to these, the soldiers of the Sultan's army use a language that appears to be some form of a Hindustani associated by the poet with

²¹ GPN MSS, folio 136.

²² Introduction to GPN Sandesara and Bhojak, p. ii.

²³ Madhav Deshpande has contested the prevalent notion in contemporary Sanskrit scholarship that the *Nāṭyaśāstra* considered the *Prakrits* to be inferior or *hīna* languages compared to Sanskrit. He points out that in fact the *Nāṭyaśāstra* uses the term *bhāṣā*, language or speech to refer to the Prakrits and calls itself the *sārvavarṇikavda*, a Veda, which is available to all social ranks and thus wants drama to be widely available, rather than being restricted to the upper classes. Madhav M. Deshpande, *Sociolinguistic Attitudes in India: An Historical Reconstruction* (Ann Arbor: Karoma Publishers, 1979), pp. 22-23. Deshpande also suggests, over time, and in the opinions of different literary scholars, the hierarchies of languages (including others like Apabhramsha and *Paiśāci*) continuously underwent changes. See *Ibid.*, pp. 22-27.

the Muslim soldiers.²⁴ However, in keeping with convention, the Sultan, like the other prominent male characters in the play, speaks Sanskrit.

The play opens with a prologue invoking the favours of the goddess, *mahāmāyā kālī*. This is followed by the entry of the *sūtradhāra* (literally the holder of the string), or stage-director, who provides an elaborate description of the Pāvah Hill, ²⁵ which he considers the abode of the gods on the earth (*surālaya*).²⁶ This hill is a veritable universe or *brahmāṇḍa*, a place where people reside at the top, the bottom and the middle and exchange mutual goodness.²⁷ These elaborate descriptions are soon intercepted by the entry of the *vidūṣaka* or jester. In tune with his traditional role in Sanskrit plays, here too, the *vidūṣaka* adds the comic element by poking fun at social proprieties. Thus throughout the play, he mocks fellow Brahmins for their lust and greed.

The *sūtradhāra* notes that the ‘enemy of the gods’ residing at Ahmedabad, that is, the Gujarati Sultan, has demanded King Gaṅgadāsa’s daughter’s hand in marriage but the latter is unwilling to stake the honour of his lineage by submitting to the request. This is the main topic of the play and the narrator tells us that he has in fact come here to participate in the play for the affection of Gaṅgadāsa, whose fame has spread in the ‘three worlds.’²⁸ The *sūtradhāra* now also describes the place where the play is to be performed. Here, the dancing girls are

²⁴ The soldiers appear to be speaking a form of Hindustani influenced by Gujarati. However, the language does not appear to be Gujarati. I am grateful to Zawahir Moir and Francesca Orsini for sharing their respective expertise of Gujarati and Hindustani with me.

²⁵ The main hill in Champaner is called Pāvāgaḍh. This name is derived from its older Sanskrit name, *Pāvah* or *Pāvakacal*, from the Sanskrit root word *pa* pure or purifying. The mountain is thus considered an auspicious space and even today remains a locally important pilgrimage site.

²⁶ Gaṅgādhara, *GPVN*, I.4, p. 1.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, I.6, p. 2.

²⁸ This conventionally refers to earth, the subterranean world, and the world of the gods in heaven.

seated before the palace of Śrī Mahākālī, and, as is appropriate, the entire group of royals has arrived to offer autumn season prayers to the goddess.²⁹ Making this clear, the *sūtradhāra* announces that he too has come to perform the play about the glory of Gaṅgadāsa composed by the poet Gaṅgādhara.³⁰ We are told that Gaṅgādhara is a renowned poet who has displayed his skills in six languages and has attained mastery over the poets of the thirty-six temples and six *guṇas* or features of poetry.³¹ The two characters introduce the play and the poet in this way and then go backstage as other characters make their entry.

At the beginning of the first act, the royal minister rushes in saying that the Sultan is enraged and insulted by Gaṅgādāsa's refusal to give him his daughter. This refusal, by implication, is also the chieftain's refusal to accept the Sultan's authority. He has also brought the news that the Sultan of Maṇḍapa or Malwa has responded to Champaner's request for assistance against his long-standing rival from Ahmedabad. Bearing these good tidings, the minister goes on to participate in the elaborate rituals that are being conducted by the Brahmins for the goddess.

In the second act of the play, the actors playing the role of the king and the jester have a light-hearted exchange about the corrupt nature of the Brahmins and the former goes on to offer elaborate prayers to the goddess. The goddess festival is evidently an elaborate affair and the king informs us that an extraordinary troupe of actors has arrived at Champaner to pay homage to the divinity. The actor named Nāṭyakāra (who now appears with his family) tells the

²⁹ This is reference to the Navaratri or Dussera festival that is still popular among the 'Rajput' princely houses of Gujarat, Saurashtra and Kutch.

³⁰ Gaṅgādhara, *GPVN*, I, p. 4.

³¹ Unfortunately, we are not told which these languages are. Gaṅgādhara, does, however, display an extraordinary knowledge of the local political conditions in Champaner and Junagadh. Though not conclusively, this does suggest some knowledge of local means of communication.

king how the poet Gaṅgādhara had travelled from the court of Vijayanagara, initially patronised by Pratāpadevarāya and then his son Mallikārjuna, to Dwarka and to Ahmedabad before arriving at the Champaner court. When Mallikārjuna was told of the poet's travels, and of the play that he had written, in honour of Gaṅgadāsa, he also encouraged Nāṭyakāra to travel north and perform the play. Thus, while the festivities continue, the actors from Karnataka perform a play in honour of the chieftain, depicting an affectionate exchange between him and the queen, Pratāpadevī, in their youth. The act ends with *vidūṣaka* and the king retiring to the banks of the lake to play a game of dice as they have just heard that the performance has disrupted the queen's prayers, a fact which has caused her to be angry. Thus, the two men prefer to avoid the queen's wrath and retire to the lake before she arrives with her ladies-in-waiting to offer prayers to the goddess.

The third act of the play is dedicated to romantic exchanges between the king and the queen, where the latter's anger gradually subsides. While they continue to be engaged in the various festivities, a chamberlain brings the news that one of Gaṅgadāsa's generals, Raṇacaṅga, has arrived in the court with the slain heads of the men from the Sultan's army, the *yavanas*, as the Muslims are often referred to in this period. The battle has begun and a victory has evidently been won. Its effects are witnessed in the fourth act of the play where the Sultan makes another attempt at reconciliation. A message is sent to Gaṅgadāsa claiming that the reason behind the attack on Champaner is that the former has been sheltering certain recalcitrant, trouble making *garāsiyās* or landholders in his

court.³² It would be wise, suggests the message, for Gaṅgadāsa to accept the Sultan's suzerainty instead of acting in favour of his enemies. This message incidentally is sent to the Champaner court by two non-Muslim allies of Muḥammad Shāh, called Nānabhūpa and Vīrama. However, for Gaṅgadāsa his independence is so precious that he insults his fellow chieftains who have accepted the Sultan's authority. A confrontation is inevitable.

The fifth act contains animated exchanges between the Sultan and his commanders. The Sultan makes lofty claims to break the power of Champaner as well as Maṇḍapa. The act ends with the news that the chieftain's commanders have captured the Sultan's dancing girls. The girls are finally returned, as Gaṅgadāsa does not consider this appropriate. In the next act, he takes up arms himself, and in the hostilities that follow the Sultan's forces suffer several defeats that force them to flee. Gaṅgadāsa decides not to pursue the fleeing army, as this would be a dishonourable act.

Vīrama, however, consoles the disheartened Sultan by bringing before him an elaborate map of the Pāvācala fort at Champaner.³³ The Sultan is once again determined to besiege the fort, but is, as usual, met with reverses. We are also made privy to the fact that he is worried about a simultaneous attack on his armies by his rival, the Sultan of Maṇḍapa, who, as we already know, is Gaṅgadāsa's ally. A new strategy is now launched of attacking the tribal areas

³² *Garāsiyās* (called '*grāsino rājānaha*' in the text), term that came to be used in the period for landholders. It did not specify the ethnic or community origin of the landholders, although Kolis or Bhils were usually singled out. This term could be used for landholders of different grades.

³³ From the Persian accounts we know that Muḥammad conquered Idar in the year 1441 CE. The *Rājā* also gave his daughter to the Sultan in acceptance of his suzerainty. The latter also attacked Bāgar in the same year. See Sir Clive Edward Bayley, *Local Muḥammadan Dynasties of Gujarāt* (New Delhi: S. Chand and Co, 1970 [1886]), pp. 129-130. The two allies of the Sultan could perhaps have been the chieftains of these kingdoms.

around the Champaner fort, which if sacked, would lead to the falling of the fort “like a ripe fruit”³⁴ Both parties seem to suffer equal reverses. The troublesome *garāsiyās*, the chieftain had been sheltering are also killed. However, it is now announced that the Sultan of Maṇḍapa is indeed on the outskirts of Muḥammad’s territories and is moving forward with a large army. On hearing this the latter deems it wise to give up the siege of Champaner. Gaṅgadāsa does not pursue the retreating army, as once again his code of honour does not permit him to attack an army that is turning back. In the final act we are brought back to the Champaner court. While the last few folios of the manuscript are missing, it seems to end with the chieftain and his queen offering prayers to the goddess Mahākālī.

Māṇḍalikaṇṇpacarita

The *Māṇḍalikaṇṇpacarita* is a poem composed in Sanskrit. It contains a total of ten *sargas* or cantos and 638 verses. Even though he provides no information about himself except that he “was the conqueror of the poets of the *Kali* age,” it is indeed quite possible that this itinerant poet from Vijayanagara, who had travelled to the Ahmedabad and Champaner courts, stopped at the court at Junagadh on his way from Dwarka in order to continue his poetic *digvijaya*, or conquest of the directions.³⁵

The *MNC* is composed as a traditional *carita* or biographical eulogy. It is a narration of the life and exploits of Māṇḍalika, the Cuḍāsamā chieftain of Junagadh. The narrative begins with a description of the city of Jirṇadurga or Junagadh and its formidable fort, where the Cuḍāsamās ruled. This is followed by a

³⁴ Gaṅgādhara, *GPVN*, VIII, p.62.

³⁵ Gaṅgādhara, *GPVN*, I, p. 18.

detailed genealogy of the Cuḍāsamā lineage, spanning five generations prior to our hero, Māṇḍalīka. Māṇḍalīka is the son of the last of these chieftains, Mahīpāla, who has obtained the prince by seeking the favours of the deity Radhā-Dāmodara. The child, therefore, is associated with Viṣṇu and is projected as a part or full incarnation of the god throughout the narrative.

After the presentation of the genealogy, we are taken through the childhood of the prince who grows up to be an extremely religious, intelligent, handsome, and brave youth. He surpasses his teachers in everything. Māṇḍalīka now eligible for marriage and a suitable bride, daughter of the Gohil chief Arjuna, who has been brought up by her paternal uncle Duda, is found for him. The Kṛṣṇa-like Māṇḍalīka is then installed as the *yuvarāja* or crown prince. Under his leadership, the city of Jirṇadurga turns into a utopia of virtue, prosperity, and happiness. Chiefs from the neighbouring provinces also offer their allegiances but king Saṅgaṇ, “king of the Western Ocean” still remains defiant. This chieftain can be identified as a pirate of the Vādhel clan who took control over parts of the coastal territory southern Saurashtra.³⁶ Māṇḍalīka is able to quickly set Saṅgaṇ right; obtaining in the bargain a rich tribute of gems and horses. He is also able to conquer and kill Duda, his Gohil father-in-law, as a favour to the *yavana* king, the Sultan of Ahmedabad.

After this victory, Mahīpāla hands over the kingdom to his son and retires from active political life. Once he has attained the throne, Māṇḍalīka, requests his minister to find him another suitable wife. The minister presents a list of about fifteen princesses from all over the subcontinent. But the minister feels that the princess most suitable for the young king is Umā, the daughter of the Jhālā

³⁶ Samira Sheikh, *State and Society*, p. 85.

chieftain Bhīma. She is suitable both in terms of her own virtues as well as her lineage. The poet describes the marriage procession and ceremony in great detail. This is followed by a description of his benevolent rule, where it is reiterated that the Jhālā and Gohil chieftains serve the king in a subordinate position.³⁷ A considerable portion of the narrative now describes the approach of spring and the king's romantic dalliances with the queens in the pleasure gardens; these sections, in imitation of the classical *kāvya* style. The scene shifts back, however, to the world of military and political activity after this interlude. Māṇḍalikā's minister informs him that all his neighbouring chieftains have accepted shelter at his feet, except Saṅgaṇ, who has once again decided to challenge his authority. The protracted battle between the two is described in detail and involves Saṅgaṇ seeking aid from a *pārasīka* or Persian chief. Māṇḍalikā eventually defeats his enemy. He also acquires a lot of booty. The *MNC* ends with further eulogistic praises of Māṇḍalikā in which he is compared with the last incarnation of Viṣṇu, that is, Kalki, the saviour of the *kali* age.

THE LOCAL KINGDOMS OF CHAMPANER AND JUNAGADH

Located at a height of 2,500 feet above the surrounding plains, some forty kilometers north-east of Baroda, Champaner separates present-day Gujarat from Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra. In the medieval period, it was an important location giving those who ruled over Patan and Ahmedabad access to, as well as protection from, the Malwa region. Tradition, as well as excavations conducted at the site, reveal a complex religious landscape for the Pavagadh hill at Champaner. Excavations have also revealed the remains of a large city built by

³⁷ The Jhālās and Gohils were also locally powerful clans based in Saurashtra.

Sultan Maḥmūd Begadā (r. 1458-1511), the most influential of the Gujarati sultans in the late fifteenth century.³⁸ It has long been a site for the worship of goddess Kali but also appears to have had a number of Śaiva as well as Jain shrines.³⁹ Thus, as an active pilgrimage site it would have also been a valuable source of revenue for rulers. Similarly, with its access to important pilgrimage sites like the Girnar hill, Dwarka and Somanatha, the fort of Junagadh was also a significant economic and strategic location for control over Gujarat. Long before the rule of the Sultans, conflict over the revenues of these sites, particularly Somanatha had been a point of conflict between the peninsular chieftains and those ruling in the east from Patan (Chapter 1).

Thus, like Idar, Champaner and Junagadh were strategically important for the sultans to be able to rule over the entire region. Until Maḥmūd Begadā managed to capture the two forts in the late fifteenth century and built new towns there, attempts to gain control over them were made by almost all his predecessors. As has already been noted, the Gujarati Sultans were faced with severe competition from the local chieftains in their attempts to consolidate their hold over the region and *vis-à-vis* other rivals like Malwa and the Deccan. As the

³⁸ Excavations were first conducted at the site of Champaner in the 1940s by the German scholar named Hermann Goetz. Later, starting in 1969 an six year long archaeological project was led by Professor R.N. Mehta of the University of Baroda. See R.N. Mehta, *Champaner: A Medieval Capital*, (Baroda: Heritage Trust, 1978) and *Chāmpāner: Ek Adhyayan* (Champaner: An Exploration) (Baroda: Mahārājā Sayājīrāo Viśvavidyālaya, 1979). Mehta's report on the excavations gives important insights into the region's history as he combines his archaeological finds, starting from pre-historic times, with literary sources and oral traditions.

³⁹ Even today, Pavagadh remains an active pilgrimage site for the worship of the goddess Kali in Gujarat. A number of traditional *garbā* songs from the region are also dedicated to the Kali who resides at Pavagadh. However, the remains of a Lakuliṣa-Mahādeva temple, as well as an actively worshipped Jain shrine are also to be found on the hill. The numerous *dargahs* and mosques that survive from the medieval city of Champaner-Muḥammadabād at the base of the hill further contribute to the complex religious geography of the site.

controllers of the main hill forts, like those of Idar, Junagadh, and Champaner, the chieftains would have had access to the numerous smaller branches of land owning lineages (like the *garāsiyās* mentioned in the *GPVN* and others) with whom they often shared kinship. Control over these as a source of military manpower as well as an economic resource was understandably a major concern for the sultans.

Sultan Maḥmūd's reign (discussed in detail in Chapter 4) marked an important shift in the nature of the polity in Gujarat, as older models of alliance politics were integrated into the larger Sultanate polity.⁴⁰ However, prior to his reign in the fifteenth century, chieftains like the Rāṭhoḍs of Idar, the Cauhāṇs of Champaner, and the Cuḍāsamās of Junagadh remained extremely powerful in their local domains. Within Saurashtra, for instance, the Cuḍāsamās of Junagadh were the most powerful among the lineages that were active in the region. Like the other lineages, including the Gohils and Jhālās, the Cuḍāsamās had migrated into the region in the early-medieval period. As already discussed, the Cuḍāsamās had long been associated with the *abhiras* or pastoralists with close links with the Sammās of Sindh, who were Muslims as well as the Jāḍejā chieftains of Kutch. It is held that they were a branch of the Sammā lineage that acquired the principality of Vanthali from the local ruler and subsequently occupied the already fortified city of Junagadh.⁴¹ From here they were able to control a considerable portion of Saurashtra until the sultans from the east defeated them in the late fifteenth century. As Samira Sheikh has discussed, prior to this defeat, the Cuḍāsamās had come to acquire an elaborate court and aspired for a prestigious Sanskritic identity, giving up the more heterodox traditions that the Jain and other

⁴⁰ See Samira Sheikh, *State and Society*, and "Alliance."

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 32-33.

chronicles attribute to them.⁴² The Cuḍāsamās are mentioned as the rulers in a number of hero-stones or *pāḷiyās* in the region, as well as on inscriptions at temples and step-wells which were patronised by merchants or courtiers and their wives. In these inscriptions, the Cuḍāsamās are linked with the Puranic dynasties of the moon; later inscriptions as well as the *MNC*, also link them to the Yadava family of Kṛṣṇa, thus legitimately incorporating them into the Vaiṣṇava fold.⁴³ Thus, by forging associations with the more Brahmanical forms of religion and emulating the established norms of Hindu kingship, a text like the *MNC* would have been one way of establishing an exalted regional status.

Less is known about the ancestry of the Cauhāṇs of Champaner compared to the Cuḍāsamās. A late nineteenth century tradition claims they belonged to the Kīcī branch of the Cauhāṇ lineage at Ranthambhor, and have migrated to Gujarat from Rajasthan soon after the conquest of Khīchiwādā by the armies of 'Alā' al-Dīn Khaljī.⁴⁴ While it is not entirely clear how they acquired the Champaner territory, a Sanskrit inscription from c. 1469 (vs 1525) gives a genealogy of nine predecessors of Gaṅgādāsa, indicating their long-standing presence in the region. The inscription is composed in a mix of Sanskrit and Old Gujarati and notes that it has been issued during the victorious reign of great king (*mahārāja*) Jayasīṃhadeva, for the benefit of his mother. It notes,

In the lineage of Pṛthvīrāja, the chief of the *cauhāṇs* (*pramukh cauhāṇ*), many kings have ruled. In the family of Hammīradeva, the ornament of his *kula*, was *rājā* Śrī Rāmadeva, Śrī Chāṅgadeva, Śrī Cācīṃgadeva ...

⁴² Ibid., p. 36.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 36-38.

⁴⁴ Major J.W. Watson, "Historical Sketch of the Hill Fortress of Pāwāgadh, in Gujarāt," *IA*, VI (1877) p. 1. Several lineages of Rajasthan and Gujarat trace their migrations from their original homelands to 'Alā' al-Dīn incursions to the region. However, many of these are later recordings and it is difficult to establish the veracity of this tradition.

Śrī Pālhaṇasimha, Śrī Jitakarṇa, Śrī Kūṃpurāula, Śrī Virdhavalā, Śrī Savarāja, Śrī Rāghadeva, Śrī Trimbakabhūpa, Śrī Gaṅgarājeśvara. His son renowned for increasing the religious merit of his ancestors worshipper of Śrī Śakti, and a perpetual bestower of cows and gold as well as the giver of grants (*śāsana*) to Brahmins, donor of elephants, the illustrious king over kings (*rājādhīraja*) Śrī Jayasimhadeva in the village *āyāsīmaṇu*, built [this] well for the spiritual benefit of his mother, Śrī Phāṇmādevī ...⁴⁵

Jayasimhadeva, the son of Gaṅgarājeśvara (Gaṅgadāsa) thus embodies all the qualities of an ideal ruler. However, it is noteworthy that the inscription links the Cauhaṇs of Champaner to the local heroes Pṛthvīrāja and Hammīra, rather than to a divine lineage. It may be recalled that in the RC we find Raṇmall also being linked to the same locally renowned historical figures.

The *Mirat-i-Sikandari* also depicts the Cauhaṇ rulers of Champaner as being actively involved in the politics of the region and, like in Raṇmall's case, as an obstruction to the Sultans' efforts towards the consolidation of their rule. Around c. 1416, Trimbakdas, the rājā of Champaner, appears to have formed a confederation with other chieftains of the region like rājā Punjā of Idar and Satarsāl of Jhalawar to invite Sulatn Hoshang Shāh of Malwa to invade Ahmedabad while Sultan Aḥmad was away from the capital dealing with other rebels.⁴⁶ Sikandar also mentions that when Sultan Muḥammad II marched against rājā Gaṅgadāsa (son of Trimbakdas) of Champaner, the latter was defeated, despite putting up a fight and fled to the upper part of the fort.⁴⁷ "When the garrison of the castle became strained, the Rājā sent ambassadors to Sultān Mehmūd of Māndu

⁴⁵ See *ibid.*, pp. 2-3 for full text of the inscription.

⁴⁶ Sikandar, *MS*, trans., pp. 14-15.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

offering to pay him a lakh of *tānkās* for every march he should make to his assistance” an episode alluded to in a somewhat different manner in the *GPVN*.⁴⁸

RHETORIC AND KINGSHIP

Both the *Cuḍāsamās* and the *Cauhāṇs* appear to have aspired for a higher social and political status in the region. The patronage of Sanskrit panegyrics, thus, may have been one among many attempts towards achieving these aspirations. However, these narratives are not static imitations of the formulaic values of kingship where the regional chieftain is merely fitted into a pre-existing framework. Instead, the *GPVN* and the *MNC* appear to actively negotiate universal ideals of kingship; the latter, in turn, are reconfigured by the needs of the localised polities.

The *GPVN* and the *MNC* thus differ from the *RC* in texture and style in many ways. The language and idioms used in these narratives are also highly stylised and are firmly rooted in the courtly *kāvya* tradition prevalent in north India from the Gupta period onwards. The two Sanskrit narratives are located in this courtly setting, which remains absent from the story of *Raṇmall*, who proves his prowess as a warrior in the open battlefield. Protecting his fort, his patrimony, and its produce from the *yavanas* appear to be his primary duties as the chieftain of *Idar*.

In contrast, *Gaṅgadāsa* and *Māṇḍalika* are endowed by their panegyrist, *Gaṅgādhara*, with elaborate palaces and courts within the precincts of their forts. These forts, as we shall see, are embellished with signs of prosperity, including

⁴⁸ Ibid. Sikandar notes, “Sultān Mehmūd without any regard for Islam in his venal greed for money, marched his army to Dohad which town was under Gujarat on the frontier of Malwa. On hearing this, Sultān Muḥammad raised the siege and came to the village of Kothra Saonli, where falling ill, returned to Ahmedabad and died on the twentieth of Muharram A.H. 855 (CE 1451-1452).”

numerous temples dedicated to Puranic deities, lakes and wells over flowing with water, provisions of food, and elaborate weaponry. Their kingly duties are also more varied and include maintaining the moral, political, and social order in their kingdoms. Moreover, it is the rule of these virtuous kings (and in the case of Māṇḍalīka, the rule of his ancestors as well) that makes these places utopias of prosperity and morality.

Thus, with Māṇḍalīka's coronation to the position of crown prince (*abhiṣekamasya yuvarājapade*) all the people in his father Mahipāl's kingdom were happy and conducted their duties with utmost honesty. There was no thief in the kingdom, except the great sun who "robbed the darkness of its treasures."⁴⁹ Nobody recited harsh words except the students of the *tarkaśāstra* (a branch of the Nyāya school of philosophy) when the Prince, Māṇḍalīka, himself only spoke sweet words.⁵⁰ No one in the kingdom talked excessively, except when praying to the Lord Puruṣottama when Māṇḍalīka only spoke a few, sweet and clever words.⁵¹ Nobody told a lie, except the deceitful lover, and if anyone did tell one it would only be for the benefit of others and not with a selfish motive.⁵² The merchants of the kingdom were also skilled and powerful, while the best of the Brahmins were happy and satisfied; so that some unusual good appeared to have been done to all creatures when the kind new king was protecting them.⁵³ Thus, Māṇḍalīka's own good qualities are all-pervasive, and prevent the populace from deviating from the path of virtuosity. These images of the kings' qualities are in many ways enduring

⁴⁹ MNC, 3.3, p. 43.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 3.4

⁵¹ Ibid., 3.5

⁵² Ibid., 3.6

⁵³ Ibid., 3.7

and belong to no particular instance in time, but rather draw from the long tradition of the aestheticised literature of *kāvya*.

Kāvya is the aestheticised form of literature; it includes poetry, prose, as well as dramatic performance. The composers of this literature were *kavis* or poets but both prose and poetry were used in *kāvya* (as is the case in the *GPVN*, for example). This literary tradition was also closely linked to the genre of Sanskrit inscriptions patronised by kings and nobles. The *kāvya* tradition of literature developed within the setting of ancient Indian courts, but reached its most elaborate and popular form during the Gupta period; it was to remain a great preoccupation of courtly circles for at least a millennium.⁵⁴ In his work on the social history of the courtly culture of early medieval India, Daud Ali discusses the origin and role of the *kāvya* tradition within the courtly context. He views the institution of the court as a coherent social formation composed of individuals, “whose relationships were governed by particular modes of behaviour and modes of thought,”⁵⁵ rather than as an impersonal overarching superstructure, as a number of scholars have done. Ali is specifically concerned with the courtly sources of beauty, refinement, and love, which, he points out, were most volubly attested, by literary texts that were produced and heard widely at the households of men of rank.⁵⁶ These included a wide variety of praise-poems or eulogies, particularly in the form of inscriptions, as well as exchanges of letters, manuals on

⁵⁴ Daud Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2006. First South Asia Edition), p. 78. For more descriptive accounts of the history of *kāvya* see A. Berriedale Keith, *The History of Sanskrit Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), Arthur A. Macdonell, *The History of Sanskrit Literature* (London, 1900), A.K. Warder, *Indian Kāvya Literature* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasiidass, 1972), vols 1-8.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

style and performance like the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, as well as shorter proverbial verses and stories with morals like the *Pañcatantra*, and manuals on love and sexuality like the *Kāmasūtra*. Further, the transmission of these components of the *kāvya* tradition was accompanied by elaborate gestures and had a 'performative' or 'spectacular' character to it. Thus, together, these literary works contributed to the education of the men (and women) who operated in the courtly milieu.

Courtly gestures and signs were interpretable by all those who were a part of its society. This meant that even if many did not understand the language itself, there still emerged a set of formulaic ideals that unified the audiences with the courtly life and also gave them the shared ability to interpret the indicators of this life. The drama and poetry produced in this tradition thus played an important role in shaping the ideologies and values of the people who were part of the courtly world.⁵⁷ Moreover, this tradition, associated with the elite groups of society was aspirational, and in the post-Gupta period was emulated and adapted by the numerous small and large courts of India and adapted to suit their own particular needs. The works of the legendary poet Kālidāsa, for instance, were retold and copied in various contexts right upto the nineteenth century.⁵⁸

Using the ornate *kāvya* style of prose and poetry, the *GPVN* and the *MNC*, then, understandably, project their patrons as idealised Kshatriya kings. Both Gaṅgadāsa and Māṇḍalikā are aware of this role and constantly reiterate its constituent values. Thus when Duda, the Gohil chief, asks Māṇḍalikā to withdraw

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 78-85.

⁵⁸ For a social history of Kālidāsa's on Śakuntalā beginning from its basis in Puranic mythology to its reinterpretation by colonial and nationalist writers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Romila Thapar, *Śakuntalā: Texts, Readings, Histories* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1999).

from the battle and “live long to enjoy the pleasures of having a son,”⁵⁹ he replies,

it is a merchant’s ambition to enjoy the pleasures of a home in the company of a wife and relatives; a king aspires for the higher joys of heaven obtainable by those who die on the battle-field.⁶⁰

Similarly, on the occasions when the Sultan’s army flees the battlefield, Gaṅgadāsa chooses not to follow them as attacking a fleeing army would not be an appropriate act for a Kshatriya.⁶¹ Thus by allowing his militarily superior rivals to run away without an actual fight, he establishes the superiority of Kshatriya values.

These ideal kings indeed also belong to excellent lineages. The *MNC* provides a genealogy that covers five generations prior to the birth of Māṇḍalika. His ancestors belong to the lunar lineage or *candra vaṁśa* and of the *yādava kula*. They have all been great warriors, have subdued neighbouring chieftains, and have also been the destroyers of the *yavanas*. In addition to this, they have been of an extremely virtuous and religious disposition and have always been generous to the Brahmins.

Māṇḍalika, who is himself a part incarnation of Dāmodara or Viṣṇu, shares all these qualities with his ancestors, thus making him a fitting descendent of this illustrious line of kings. While the play does not provide a conventional genealogy for Gaṅgadāsa, he is also mentioned more than once as the descendent of the great Cauhaṇ Hammira of Ranthanbhor and represented as a virtuous and religious benefactor of the Brahmins. His virtuosity is in fact attested by a disembodied voice from the sky. When the Sultan receives the news that the women of his harem

⁵⁹ Velankar, “Māṇḍalika” p. 45 and Gaṅgādhara Kavi, *MNC*, III.58, p. 50.

⁶⁰ Ibid, III.63 and Velankar, “Māṇḍalika,” p. 45.

⁶¹ Gaṅgādhara, *GPVN*, VIII, p. 71.

have been captured by the Cauhān chieftain, he is angry and alarmed. But the voice (perhaps meant to be divine) reassures him that,

These dancing girls were brought before Gaṅgadāsa while he was sitting with Pratāpadevī, Nāmālladevī and other queens. The king who did never cast a glance at other women was displeased; he gave jewels and ornaments to the girls and returned them safely in palanquins to the Sultans camp.⁶²

Both the narratives, then, construct the personalities of their protagonists within a formulaic Hindu idiom that later came to be associated with a legitimate Rajput high culture; thus entirely negating the more ambiguous origins of these groups. At the same time, however, these timeless depictions of Gaṅgādāsa and Māṇḍalīka's positions as kings are integrated and located within the political contexts to which they belong.

Thus, Kavi Gaṅgādhara's use of Sanskrit and the classical *kāvya* mode to compose panegyrics for his patrons, the two local chieftains from the wider region of Gujarat, is accompanied by a keen eye for the intricacies of their local political and social contexts. At the preliminary level, especially in terms of their structure, the *GPVN* and the *MNC* seem to contain most of the essential elements of the courtly *kāvya* tradition. However, despite the external framework of the classical drama and *mahākāvya*, the two narratives are primarily engaged with presenting an unusually detailed depiction of the political activity surrounding the Champaner (*Campakapurī*) and Junagadh (*Jirṇadurga*) kingdoms. The poet also mentions specific personal names of military commanders, courtiers, subordinates, and so forth, along with the details of the events that he chooses to portray, assuming a prior knowledge of these among those who are listening to or watching his narratives being performed. Thus his narratives engage with the

⁶² Ibid.

complexities of the context within which they are produced, making them accessible to the audience that was consciously aware of and actively involved in that context. The universal and timeless ideals of kingship thus get modified by the needs of this localised context.

Thus, while the initial reason for the Gujarati Sultan's attack on Champaner appears to be Gaṅgadāsa's refusal to give him his daughter in marriage, the real reason is revealed to the audience only in a later act of the play. The two 'Kshatriya' allies of the Sultan, have written a letter to the Cauhāṇ chieftain, stating,

Do not shelter the *garāsiyās*, who are the enemies of the Sultan and are making trouble in his territories ... do not initiate enmity... a clever man knows these times well, this is not the time of the Kshatriyas, it is the *kali* age of the *yavanas*.⁶³

They advise Gaṅgadāsa to marry his daughter to the Sultan, wash his feet in submission and thus give up his honour and pride and accept his suzerainty instead of challenging him by giving refuge to the trouble-makers.⁶⁴ At the end of the play, when the battle between the Sultan and the *Rājā* is at its height, some of the *garāsiyas* are killed by Muḥammad's soldiers.⁶⁵ The families of the deceased men are desperate with rage; the sons of these brave warriors have left the fort to fight the Sultan while their devoted wives have walked into their funeral pyres as the war trumpets sound in the background.⁶⁶ Gaṅgadāsa is disappointed on hearing the news. He articulates in no uncertain terms that they were the cause of his rivalry with the Sultan. He is upset that he has not been able to save the lives of

⁶³ Gaṅgādhara, *GPVN*, IV, p.40.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, VIII, p. 67.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

those who sought protection under him and chides himself for not living upto his Cauhāṇ lineage, which is well known for the granting refuge to those who need it.⁶⁷ He now forbids his officers from using the services of the remaining *garāsiyās* in the battle against the Sultan; it is his duty, as their protector, to keep them away from danger. The surviving *garāsiyās*, however, are eager to fight as they have pledged their lives in gratitude to Gaṅgadāsa. Despite these emotional exchanges, the death of the *garāsiyās* has created a sense of futility around the enmity between the Sultan and Gaṅgadāsa and has re-established the partial superiority of the Sultan. The poet finally resolves the matter by bringing the play to a close and by shifting the focus on to another field of competition, Muḥammad Shāh must leave the battlefield as his other major rival, the Sultan of Maṇḍapa is now about to seize Ahmedabad with an army of one lakh cavalry, two lakh foot soldiers, and a thousand elephants.⁶⁸ His ally, Virama, goes on to provide a justification for Sultan Muḥammad's action by pointing out that the protection of one's own territories should be a king's foremost task.⁶⁹

In the *MNC* too, the Sultan of Ahmedabad sends an envoy to Mahīpāla, Māṇḍalīka's father, complaining that the Duda, the Gohil chieftain who is his son's father-in-law, is wreaking havoc within the sultanate territories.⁷⁰ The envoy warns the king about the Gohil and his associates and states that they would disregard their matrimonial ties with him in due course as well.⁷¹ Mahīpāla reassures the envoy that he considers the Sultan's enemy to be his enemy. Yet, in

⁶⁷ Ibid., VIII, p. 68.

⁶⁸ Ibid., VIII, p. 70.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.

⁷⁰ Velankar, "Māṇḍalīka," p. 44.

⁷¹ Ibid., and Gaṅgadhara Kavi, *Māṇḍalīkamahākāvya*, III, pp. 47-51.

reality, he is troubled by the thought of fighting his relative in support of the *yavana*. He notes that on the one hand, a battle with the *yavanas*, who had increased their strength owing to this Kali age, was not a happy thing. Already the king of the *yavanas* had deprived several of their kings of their kingdoms. However, the *yavana* king had shown no open enmity towards the royal family of the Yadavas (i.e. the Cūḍāsamās) and thus he feels it is wise not to voluntarily initiate a situation of hostility⁷². His minister also counsels him to the same effect,

That *yavana* king, who on the strength of his army of elephants and thousands of horses had conquered the world, had courted your friendship. What greater good and safety do you ask for? It would therefore be best for you to do what is pleasing for him. On the other hand, if I were to recount the misdeeds of Duda I am afraid that I would incur the displeasure of the prince. These chiefs always seek shelter under you when they are attacked by the *yavanas* and yet claim as their own the lands bordering your kingdom (*simabhūmimapahr̥tya*).⁷³

Hearing the advice given to his father, Māṇḍalika rises to the occasion and eventually gives up his moral dilemma. He kills his father-in-law in the interest of Cūḍāsamā authority in Saurashtra as well as his relationship with the more powerful sultan.

Similarly, in the person of Saṅgaṇa, the king of the Western Ocean, we find a strong rival claimant of resources and defiance of the Cūḍāsamā claims of authority over Saurashtra. On Māṇḍalika's consecration as the crown prince the kings of the bordering territories sent gifts and he suitably honoured them in turn.⁷⁴ Unlike the others who had accepted his supreme position, Saṅgaṇa disregarded the news brought by Cūḍāsamā envoy. Mahīpāla, though angered,

⁷² Ibid., III. 34, III.35 and Velankar, "Māṇḍalika," p. 44.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 45, and Gaṅgādhara Kavi, MNC, III. 40, p. 49.

⁷⁴ Ibid., III.10, p. 47.

only smiled but his son Māḍalīka rose to the occasion and pledged to fight the insubordinate chief.⁷⁵ The battle is described in some detail, at the end of which the prince manages to break Saṅgaṇa's weapon and makes him fall from his horse. Despite the clear advantage he has over his enemy, Māḍalīka, now spares his life (*jivanadānadādāmiti*, lit. "I grant you the boon of life"),⁷⁶ only collecting a tribute in the form of horses and gems.⁷⁷

The tension between the two rival claimants to authority in the region does not end here. Saṅgaṇa once again appears in the later part of the narrative, where he not only disregards the kindness Māḍalīka has shown towards him by sparing his life, but also in fact wants the Cuḍāsamā chieftain to submit to his authority.⁷⁸ This battle is described with even more intricate details than the earlier one. The armies showered volleys of flaming arrows at one another but the poet informs us that those fired by Saṅgaṇa's men were fused and like a cold rain.⁷⁹ When he is on the verge of finally being subdued by Māḍalīka, Saṅgaṇa is joined by a *pāraṣika* (Persian) chieftain.⁸⁰ In both the encounters with Saṅgaṇa, Māḍalīka is able to acquire large quantities gold, silver, pearls, and jewels as well as horses and camels. These are in turn distributed among subordinate kings, artisans, and bards.⁸¹

The narratives thus show an acute awareness of the region's historical and political realities. Moreover, in the poet's depiction of these multiple spheres of

⁷⁵ Ibid., III.13.

⁷⁶ Ibid., III.23, p. 48.

⁷⁷ Ibid., III.22.

⁷⁸ Ibid., VIII, pp.28-32.

⁷⁹ Ibid., IX.10, p. 34.

⁸⁰ Ibid., IX.21, p. 35.

⁸¹ Ibid., IX, pp. 33-37 and Velankar, "Māḍalīka," p. 51.

rivalry, we are able to perceive the pressures to forge ties and struggles to establish hierarchies that may have existed between these different players. Further, these multiple spheres of rivalry become the site on which the poet is able to construct an idealised Kshatriya persona around his Cauhāṇa and Cuḍāsamā patrons. Predictably, they are virtuous, brave, and just protectors of those who seek shelter under them; they also belong to prestigious lineages, all of which were qualities that later came to form the essence of a Rajput high culture.

Kavī Gaṅgādhara thus presents a detailed and complex picture of the kind of political and social negotiations that his patrons may have been undergoing, furthermore, and despite the use of the courtly drama and epic poem form, his work gives a sense of being a commentary on the region's history. The poet easily shifts back and forth between the universalised and timeless realm of *kāvya* and the specificities of the region's contemporary politics.

The poet provides no background to the various crucial political conflicts in the play and the *mahākāvya*. In the *GPVN*, he also does not give an explanation of the role of the *garāsīyās*, nor for the more long-term rivalry between the Gujarati and Malwa Sultan. Similarly, the intricate details of Māṇḍalika's relations with others in the region, as well as the Sultan, are not supported with any other information about them. Gaṅgādhara, instead, assumes a familiarity with these factors on the part of his audience. Thus an understanding of these narratives, I suggest, requires a prior familiarity of the region's geography and politics. The events he describes, and the idioms he uses, firmly situate Gaṅgādhara's narratives within their local contexts. The *GPVN* and the *MNC* would thus have established their patron's glory within his own social and political domains, rather than facilitating their spread to other parts of the subcontinent. Further, despite the

use of the different universalised idioms of kingship, neither of the two king's, Gaṅgādāsa nor Māṇḍalāika, aspire for the conquest of all directions or *digvijaya*, an essential element of a Hindu king's aspirations to expand his realm. Their aspirations are limited to protecting their sovereignty and status within their own patrimonies instead and do not even extend to a conquest of the Sultan's territories. The merger of the *dhārmic* norms of kingship with their localised manifestations would have contributed to facilitating the process of the chieftains into becoming more accepted as 'rājās' or kings within the areas in which they sought supremacy.

AN IMAGINED POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PLACE

Just as he is concerned with portraying the intricate details of the region's political history, Gaṅgādhara also seems to have a real and imagined sense of a political geography within which he places the fort kingdoms of Champaner and Junagadh. This geography is not entirely disconnected from the poet's imagination of his patrons' exalted royal position and achievements as truly virtuous rulers who follow all the duties of kingship prescribed by *dharma*. In their perceptions of 'place' the two narratives once again display an intricate interaction between the local and the universal.

One form of geographical knowledge which Gaṅgādhara depicts in his work is that of the local topography, particularly that of Champaner and its adjoining hill, Pāvācala or Pavagadha. The GPVN begins with the *sūtradhāra* describing the virtues of this hill, which is the abode of Mahākālī. It is the place which Lord Śiva

visits after having left his snow-clad mountain in the agony of separation from his beloved.

It [the hill] is the support of the weak ... it is the place where the residents of all three worlds find friendship ... where the earth is pure and radiant, touched by the soft breeze and the skies are bright and clear ...⁸²

The virtuous people to Champaner live around this heavenly Pāvakacala or auspicious mountain. These poetic effusions merge with the strategic requirements of the rivalry at a later moment in the drama. In the seventh act, when the Sultan is disheartened by his losses at the hands of Gaṅgadāsa's army, one of his Rajput allies, Vīrama, gets a detailed map of the fort and its surroundings painted on a *paṭṭa* or cloth in order to facilitate their movements through it. The source of these details is a Brahmin who regularly visits the fort in order to receive the generous donations continuously being made by Gaṅgadāsa's mother, Bhāmābā. The map shows that on the summit of the hill there is a Śiva temple made of gold and silver. In the distance, between the east and north, there is a lake named *Rāmaṇagaṇḍe* built by Rāma (*rāmacaṇḍreṇa nirmitam*).⁸³ The deep lake to the south has been created by Sītā and to the west of it is another lake named *Bhīmagayā*, created by Bhīma.⁸⁴ On its west is a large lake with white waters (*bhūrisudhādhvalavāriṇa*) created by Gaṅgadāsa which is surrounded by the temples of Gaṇeśa, Durga, Dinkara, Kṣetrapāla, and the Jina.⁸⁵ The clouds that are ever visible on the top of the hill are the smoke from the sacrificial fires. The fort is also dotted with the dwelling places of the other members of the royal family; the

⁸² Ibid., I, pp. 1-2.

⁸³ Ibid., VII.7, p. 57.

⁸⁴ Ibid., VII.9, VII.10.

⁸⁵ Ibid., VII.11, VII.12.

victory flags (*jayapatākā*) furled on this are a constant reminder of the ongoing festivities.⁸⁶ The place is prosperous beyond belief and replete with food, wealth, and wells. The subordinate kings also live happily in this fort that is forever watched over by the gods. On the south of the king's own palace are the stables (*vājīśālā*) and living space for cows and other cattle. The goddess Mahākālī is constantly protecting Gaṅgadāsa from the summit where she is sporting with the goddess.⁸⁷ On the left of her temple, is the temple of desire-fulfilling *Jareśavara deva*. Thus Virama's elaborate description takes the audience (and within the play the Sultan) through the intricate details of the hill fort's geography mixed with references to Puranic mythology. The poet does not only describe the location of the a particular palace, temple, or water body, but also makes it a point to note the prosperity that surrounds these; an important element to describe and emphasise before the audience of royals that may have been attending the celebrations related to the goddess festival. As has already been discussed, this knowledge of the local geography, real or imagined, is accompanied by a similar knowledge of local politics. Gaṅgādhara, the poet from Vijayanagara, not only sets his play within this politics of Champaner and Gujarat, but also gives us the names of individuals and lineages that may have been involved in the events.

However, once again, the poet links his Cauhaṇ protagonist with the wider political networks of the subcontinent. The Vijayanagara king, Mallikārjuna, learns about Gaṅgādhara's travels to Champaner and Gaṅgadāsa's wealth and generosity through an itinerant poet or *vaitālika*.⁸⁸ Thus, another form

⁸⁶ Ibid., VII.14.

⁸⁷ Ibid., VII.30, p. 59.

⁸⁸ Ibid., II, p. 18.

of geography that enters the narratives is the poet's imagination of the various subcontinental links for his patrons in the little kingdoms of Gujarat. Thus, while Champaner was an important kingdom within the politics of the emerging Gujarat region, it was much smaller and less powerful than other regional polities like Malwa, Vijayanagara, or the kingdoms of the Deccan. Yet, in a particularly interesting act of the play, the poet again appears to equate the little kingdom of his Cauhaṇ patrons to the wider network of regional polities that existed in that period. Thus, just before the poet introduces his audience to the real cause of the rivalry between the *rājā* and the Sultan, he dedicates almost an entire act to the former's interaction with his courtiers within his palace or *antahpura*. As he sits on his throne in full courtly regalia, surrounded by musicians, female attendants, and ministers, he receives his envoys or *dūtas* who have brought news from every direction. Each of the *dūtas* has returned with detailed reports after visiting the courts of the king of Siṃhaladeśa, the Gajapati king in the east, the king of Campāranya in the north, and the Sultan of Delhi. They bring news of utter political mayhem in these places where treason and war have undermined the rulers' positions. Compared to these chaotic situations, Gaṅgadāsa's kingdom in the west is seen as one in which there is peace and prosperity.

The fourth act of the play opens with, Raṇacaṅga, one of Gaṅgadāsa's military commanders, entering the court after slaying the Sultan's commander, Naroj, and five thousand of his soldiers. His entry to the court is followed by the arrival of the *dūtas*. They narrate their observations in great detail giving a distinct sense of the nature of each of the places described. Thus, the messenger reporting the city of Siṃhala lord (*siṃhaleśa*) describes a rather complex process by which precious gems are produced here: in this city there is a lake named *mantharavāhinī*,

in which there are lotuses of a number of hues. When the king bathes in the lake along with his wife, drops of water splash into the flowers.⁸⁹ It is these drops of water, that along with other factors, including the impact of the gem goddess (*ratnadevyāha*) turn into solid gems and are coloured depending upon the colour of lotus in which they were born. So, the red lotuses produces rubies, the blue ones produce blue gems/sapphires or *nīlama*, and the yellow flowers produce gold coloured gems, the ones which have solidified with two or three filaments bring forth cat-eye gems. The courtiers are struck by this unusual phenomenon but the messenger reassures them that he is merely reporting what he has experienced himself (*pratyakśamanubhūta*) rather than from interference (*anumanena*), or through the words of a loved one (*āptavacanena*).⁹⁰

Next, the king inquires about the events in the east. Here, reports the messenger, the Lord of the Elephants, or Gajapati, has been poisoned by his minister with the intension of usurping the throne. He also describes in some detail the preparatory rituals associated with the pleasures of Lord Jagannatha (These, according to him, are indeed beyond this world or *lokottarameva*). The next messenger brings news from the north, in Cāmpārāṇya, where the wise king has gradually managed to increase the size of his already large army.⁹¹ In this region, another kind of precious stone seems to hold significance. This is the *śaligrāma* stone or *śaligrāmaśilā*, which is the black, and usually spherical stone considered to be the aniconic form of Viṣṇu.

⁸⁹ Gaṅgādhara, *GPVN*, IV, p. 36.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37 and verse 17, p. 37.

⁹¹ The messenger uses an interesting analogy here: he says that the king first gained control over the source of the flow of the water and having freed this flow, he then managed to acquire the ocean, meaning that with the help of a small army he was able to obtain more soldiers thus enlarging the size of his core army. *Ibid.*, IV.22, p. 38.

The next messenger reports about *ḍhillīpuram* where there is the rule of the sultans. The line of the sultans is coming to an end, he informs the king. The continued hand-to-hand fighting is causing their end and the goddesses of death (*yoginis*) are hovering there in groups eager to drink the enemy's blood.⁹²

After these animated reports from the three directions and Delhi, the king wants to know about the happenings in the west. The messenger reports,

... hundreds of kings who have taken shelter under him (king Gaṅgadāsa), along with their sons and grandsons, remain extremely satisfied and happy. Burning with the desire of swallowing the *gurjara-maṇḍala* at every occasion, *mahammad suratrāṇa* (Muḥammad sultan) bites his lip [in defeat].⁹³

The Cauhāṇ kingdom is thus seen as being equal, if not superior, to a number of other important kings in the subcontinent, including Ahmedabad and Delhi.

Similarly, in the MNC, Māṇḍalīka is eulogised as an ideal, almost god-like being. His intelligence and knowledge far exceed those of his teachers' and his physical beauty surpasses even that of the gods. He frolics with his queens in the gardens of spring and protects his subjects like a brave warrior and benevolent father. These characteristics, and the manner in which they are described, can be attributed universally to any royal protagonist of a *kāvya* composition. Yet, the actual military and political achievements of this fantastic and universalised king are restricted to the realm of the domestic or local. Despite the repeated mention of him and his ancestors as the 'destroyer of the *yavanas*,' Māṇḍalīka only conquers chieftains of the local lineages, like the Gohils, the Jhālās or Saṅgaṇa, the chieftain from coastal Saurashtra. It is against these chieftains who shared the political space within Saurashtra with the Cudāsamas, that Māṇḍalīka conducts his military

⁹² Ibid., IV.26, p. 39.

⁹³ Ibid., IV, p.39.

expeditions and gains ritual submission. This prominence of the local within the universal becomes even more obvious in Māṇḍalika's minister's description of all the princesses that he can potentially wed once he has been crowned king. The minister notes:

... the daughter of the king of *śiṃhaladvīpa* is a *padminī*, she has lotus-like eyes ... [but] she is of low birth⁹⁴... the daughter of the *karnāṭa* king is proficient in playing the *vīṇā* and in other musical arts, [she] is endowed with all the auspicious bodily marks and has beautiful eyes [but] she is not appropriate as she has a dark complexion⁹⁵... the daughter of the king of *madhyadeśa* is proficient in painting [but] her thighs are thickly covered with hair⁹⁶... the daughter of the king of *mahāraṣṭra* is well dressed and has a cuckoo-like voice (but) is much too clever and witty ...⁹⁷

The minister describes the princesses of *triliṅga*, *kaliṅga*, *kānyakubja*, *kāmarūpa*, *gopācala*, *medapāṭa* (Mewad), and several other kingdoms all over the subcontinent in a similar vein. The criticisms finally end when he comes to the daughter of the Jhālā chieftain, Bhīma. She is not only beautiful, virtuous, and skilled in every art but also of a noble lineage. This princess and her father are both mentioned by name. We are also given the details of Bhīma's capital and his current whereabouts. The poet thus claims a position for his apparently 'regional' level protagonist within the wider political networks of the subcontinent. In Gaṅgādhara's imagination, Māṇḍalika obviously has access to the daughters of all these different kings. The act of rejecting them establishes his superiority over their fathers' kingdoms. The choice of marrying the Jhālā princess on the other hand confirms his position within the local political scenario.

⁹⁴ Gaṅgādhara Kavi, *MNC*, IV.8.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, IV.9.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, IV.15.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, IV.19

Moreover, apart from the vision of a wider political world, the author of the *GPVN* also imagines an audience that lies beyond the immediate audience comprising the “entire group of kings who has come to the shrine of Mahākālī, to worship the goddess in the autumn season.”⁹⁸ The last act of the play begins with a travelling poet, or *vaitālika*, singing the praises of the victorious Gaṅgadāsa. He is joined by the glory or *kīrti* of the Cauhān a king and the infamy or *apakīrti* of the Ahmedabad Sultan, personified as two women, the first of the two being of noble birth. It is noteworthy that the noble-woman *kīrti*, speaks in Sanskrit while the *vaitālika* and *apakīrti* use *Prakrit* and are in that assigned a lower status in the play. But the *vaitālika*’s ability to comprehend Sanskrit also allows him to be the transmitter of Gaṅgādharā’s tale in the language of the people. The two women are introduced to each other by the *vaitālika* and soon discover that they share a birthday, that is, they are both born on the day that Muḥammad Sultan, with his mighty armies, was defeated by Gaṅgadāsa. Gaṅgadāsa’s *kīrti* and the Sultan’s *apakīrti* are now eager to travel the world. The bard, whom they consider their brother, has promised to take them from “country to country (*deśa deśāntaram*), island to island (*dvīpa dvīpantaram*), pilgrimage to pilgrimage (*tīrtha tīrthāntaram*), city to city (*pura purāntaram*), royal court to royal court (*rājasabhā rājasabhāntaram*), from one gathering of noblemen to another (*sajjanasabhā sajjanasabhāntaram*), forest to forest (*vana vanāntaram*) ...”⁹⁹ and to any other place beyond these that they may wish to go to (*yad yad gantumicasi tat tadeva nayiṣye*).¹⁰⁰ The poet thus imagines a world pervaded by the story of Gaṅgadāsa’s victory and the Sultan’s

⁹⁸ Ibid., I, p. 4.

⁹⁹ Ibid., IX, p. 73.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

loss. In bringing the *vaitālika* together with the personified forms of glory and infamy, he also brings about the merger of the written with the oral. Gaṅgādhara *kavī* thus hopes for the spread of his written tale through the oral version that the bard or *vaitālika* will sing on his travels along with his two sisters.

Thus, in the *GPVN* and the *MNC* the poet imagines multiple geographies. However, whether these geographies are related to topography or to the wider political networks outside and within Gujarat, they situate the king and his kingdom within their local contexts. In other words, while the universal values of kingship are evoked, in the poet's imagined geography they are woven into and reconfigured by the 'place' to which they belong.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has shown how the poet Gaṅgādhara imagines his regional patrons from Champaner and Junagadh in his Sanskrit compositions. In both the *GPVN* and the *MNC*, the poet projects his patrons as universalised Kshatriya kings, and yet, situates them within their very localised context. In that, there emerges a rhetoric of kingship that appears to have been created for the localised milieu of immediate rivals and the local population. The image of the morally superior Kshatriya king makes for an effective foil against the *yavana* sultan as well as those regional rivals who may have chosen to support him. Their situation as the most successful kings within their local political scenario further establishes their moral and political superiority. It can also be suggested therefore that Gaṅgādhara's compositions belong to the body of 'regional' Sanskrit texts that had an immense significance despite the emergence of the regional vernaculars. In Gujarat, as the existence of Udayarāja's *Rājavinoda* demonstrates, Sanskrit was also patronised by

Sultan Muḥmūd Begada (and his predecessor Muḥammad whose court Gaṅgādhara may have travelled to), despite the growing significance of Gujarī as the language of the regional court. Thus even though the regional languages had come into use for courtly productions in the post 1000 CE period, Sanskrit remained secure as a symbol of power and glory.¹⁰¹

As Yigal Bronner and David Shulman have suggested for another context,¹⁰² not only did such texts often use a form of Sanskrit that was modified by the grammar of the regional language but were also shaped by the region's geography and historical specificities. As works that were firmly set in the local context, they would have established their patron's glory within their own social and political domain, rather than spreading his fame far and wide. For their composer, *kavi* Gaṅgādhara, a poet originally hailing from Vijayanagara, who we are told had been travelling from one court to another in Gujarat, it must also have afforded the possibility of traversing several domains through which he could display the versatility of his poetic skills.

¹⁰¹ See V. N. Rao, "Coconut and Honey: Sanskrit and Telugu in medieval Andhra," *Social Scientist*, 24, 10-12 (1995): 24-40.

¹⁰² Yigal Bronner and David Shulman, "'A Cloud Turned Goose' Sanskrit in the Vernacular Millennium," *IESHR*, 43, 1 (2006): 1-30.

Chapter 4

The Sultan as a Kshatriya King: Poet Udayarāja's *Rājavinoda* or

Śrīmahamūdāsutrāṇacaritra

Fateh Khān, later to become Sultan Maḥmūd Begaḍā (c. 1456-1511), defeated Rā Māṇḍalika of Junagadh in a decisive victory in 1472. Several attempts by his predecessors to subjugate the chieftain prior to this had failed. Maḥmūd had harnessed a vast amount of financial and military resources in order to achieve his victory as the Rā was well protected by the mountainous and forested lands surrounding his fortified territories. Māṇḍalika was eventually beaten; he accepted Islam, and was granted the title of Khān Jahān according to the Persian histories of the sultanate; this tale is quite different from the one of the virtuous and brave Kshatriya king of the *Māṇḍalikānṛpacarita* composed only a few years earlier.¹ The Cauhāṇ kingdom of Champaner was also taken over by Maḥmūd some eleven years after the conquest of Junagadh, in c. 1483. As in the previous years, the Sultan's relationship with Champaner was closely tied up with their relations with their regional rivals, the sultans of Malwa, as this hill kingdom lay on the strategic borders of both their domains. The conquest of Champaner thus marked an important victory against the rulers of Malwa as well. Maḥmūd established the city of Muḥammadābād at the base of the Pavagadh Hill to commemorate his success. But Junagadh, Girnar, and Champaner were not the only chieftaincies that Maḥmūd subjugated. He also launched successful campaigns against the chieftains

¹ Sikandar, MS, trans, p. 57. Māṇḍalika is said to have died in Ahmedabad. Sikandar also reports that Māṇḍalika, on moving to the capital of the Sultans, was deeply influenced by the spiritual powers of the saint Shāh Ālam.

in the coastal areas of Diu and Jagat, parts of Sindh and Kutch. He was also closely involved in the wider politics of the region, aiding or fighting kingdoms in the Deccan, Malwa, and southern Rajasthan.

Maḥmūd's military achievements and administrative measures to bring the chieftains of the region under control are reported extensively in the Persian sources. These accounts speak of his continuous military campaigns to subjugate the ruling chieftains as well as the ever-rebellious nobility, which, in Gujarat, included men from diverse ethnic origins. Sikandar bin Muḥammad alias Manjhu's *Mirat-i-Sikandari*, for instance regards him as the most influential of the rulers of the regional sultanate. Sikandar writes, "May it not remain secret that this Sultan was the best of the Gujarat Sultans as a ruler, as a warrior, and a dispenser of justice."² Similar praise for Maḥmūd is found in earlier accounts of his reign like Abd-ul Karim Hamdāni's *Tārikh-i-Maḥmūd Shāhī* (second half of the fifteenth century) as well as in later works like the *Tārikh-i-Ferishta*, where he is regarded as both militarily successful and as a wise, just, and pious ruler.³

However, apart from these Persian writings, we also have a rare panegyric dedicated to Maḥmūd composed in Sanskrit sometime between 1458 and not later than 1469, which portrays him as an ideal Kshatriya protagonist of a *kāvya* composition. As Gaṅgādhara, another poet, Udayarāja, appears to have sold his literary wares at the court of this Gujarati sultan in the fifteenth century and

² Ibid., p. 42.

³ Hamdani was originally from the Bahamani region but had settled in Gujarat for some years during Begaḍā's reign. See M. Hasan Mahamud's Introduction to *Tarikh-i-Maḥmūd Shāhī*. S.C. Misra, ed. (Baroda: M.S. University, 1988), pp. i-xi and Briggs, *Ferishta*, vol. IV, pp. 27-47. Maḥmūd, however, only finds passing mention in the sixteenth century text, the *Tarikh-i-Salatin-i-Gujarat* by Maḥmūd Bukhārī, which focuses mainly on Aḥmad Shāh and Bahadur Shāh. See A.A. Tirmizi, "Tarikh-i-Salatin-i-Gujarat," *Medieval India Quarterly*, 5 (1963), p. 41.

composed a *mahākāvya* dedicated to him. This is the *Rājavinodamahākāvya* (Amusement of the King), also referred to as the *Śrīmahamūdasuratrāṇacaritra* (Life of Sultan Maḥmūd). Udayarāja has also been identified as the composer of a *praśasti* dedicated the same sultan inscribed on the Dohad stone inscription of c. 1488 on the basis of the similarities in style, presentation and orthography.⁴ The events recorded in the Dohad stone inscription suggest that it was composed later than the *mahākāvya* as these are not mentioned in the latter.⁵ If Udayarāja was indeed the composer of this inscription, then it is possible that he would have resided and worked in Maḥmūd's domains for several years.⁶ Both the *mahākāvya* and the *praśasti* are written in the rich language of *kāvya* and describe the virtues and achievements of the great Sultan and his lavish court.

The present chapter focuses on *Rājavinodamahākāvya*, the Sanskrit panegyric dedicated to Sultan Maḥmūd Begaḍā. Here, I study the text to understand how this Muslim sultan was represented as an ideal Kshatriya hero, the typical protagonist of a *kāvya* composition. The chapter specifically analyses this work in the light of the foregoing discussions of regional kingship in fifteenth-century Gujarat and attempts to explore the implications of Udayarāja's representation of Sultan Maḥmūd within his contemporary context. This was a context in which rivalries and negotiations with the local chieftains had an important bearing on the stability of sultanate rule. The chieftains of Gujarat, in the narratives patronised at their courts, appear to reinforce local aspirations of

⁴ P.K. Gode, "Dates of Udayarāja and Jagaddhara," *Journal of the University of Bombay*, IX (NS), 2, (1940): 101-115.

⁵ See H.D. Sankalia, ed., "Dohad Stone Inscription of Mahamuda (Begarrah): V.S. 1545, Saka 1410," *EI*, XXIV (1937-38): 212-225.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

kingship despite the use of a transregional language such as Sanskrit. The regional sultans, on the other hand, aspired for a somewhat wider sphere of influence, beyond the immediate boundaries of their kingdoms. While Udayarāja recognises their position as the rulers of the kingdom of Gujarat, the *Rājavinoda* also represents its protagonist as a paramount king, who is served by the numerous other kings of Bhāratavarṣa.

In the last chapter, I discussed how scholars like Daud Ali and Sumit Guha, as well as Yigal Bronner and David Shulman, have critiqued Sheldon Pollock's argument regarding the two distinct roles played by Sanskrit and the regional vernaculars from c. 1000 onwards. These authors, through detailed studies of inscriptions and texts, have demonstrated that Sanskrit was, in fact, put to multiple uses and occupied an ever-shifting place in the hierarchy of languages available at the extremely dynamic regional courts of the subcontinent. In my reading of the Sanskrit works from the local courts of Gujarat, I also demonstrated that the use of Sanskrit and the *kāvya* genre in the localised courts served to reinforce the chieftains' status within the limited space of their own domains and in relation to their social and territorial rivals, rather than serving a universal cosmopolitan purpose. In the Sanskrit panegyric to Sultan Maḥmūd we find the language and the *kāvya* tradition being deployed to yet another local end. The fact that the ideologies that lay behind this idea of kingship in the *kāvya* genre were different from those of the Islamic ideals of the institution do not appear to concern the poet at all. Instead, Udayarāja draws from the long history of the sultans' position in the region and amalgamates it with the pool of pre-existing idioms of ideal kingship accessible to him. Through a study of the *Rājavinoda*, I demonstrate that Sanskrit

and *kāvya* served the truly political (rather than religious) function of creating yet another idea of regional kingship.

The first section of the chapter discusses certain examples of the debates related to Islamic kingship and political culture in India. The discussion focuses on the manner in which Islamic ideals of kingship encountered and negotiated the normative models prevalent in the local context of the Indian subcontinent, particularly during the rule of the early Delhi Sultanate and in its successor states. I then go on to discuss the figure of Sultan Maḥmūd in the more readily-available Persian texts in order to set up the contrast with the manner in which he is represented in the *Rājavinodamahākāvya*m. The final section focuses on the text. Here, I first analyse the portrayal of the king and his court as they are depicted in terms typical of the *kāvya* genre. Second, I explore the specificities of the poet's understanding of the king's domain and sovereignty. Together, the sections seek to develop an understanding of the manner in which the rule of the Islamic sultan was incorporated into the cosmopolitan literary conventions of the period, reinforcing its power and prestige in the regional context.

MUSLIM KINGS AND HINDU SUBJECTS

Scholars of medieval South Asia have now come a long way from viewing Islamic rule over the non-Islamic population as the clash of civilisations or as the imposition of a completely new and alien mode of governance on a pre-existing and pristine Hindu culture.⁷ The relationship between the Islamic kings and their

⁷ Some examples of this view can be found in R.C. Majumdar, ed., *Age of Imperial Unity* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1951), *The Delhi Sultanate* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1960) and C.V. Vaidya, *The History of Mediaeval Hindu India (Being a History of India from 600-1200 AD)*, 2 vols (Poona: Oriental Book Supplying Agency, 1921-1926).

Hindu subjects has been widely recognised as a dialogic and interactive one rather than one driven by straightjacket monolithic ideas of conquest and destruction. Recently, Muzaffar Alam has also demonstrated through a detailed study of normative traditions in Persian how political Islam itself underwent a number of changes in its interactions with the Indian subcontinent during the Mughal period.⁸

Islamic political culture influenced and interacted with the non-Islamic populations in various complex ways. Nurul Hasan, for instance, notes that when the Delhi Sultanate was first established in the thirteenth century, the Muslim jurists (*ulamā*) expected the rulers to rule according to the laws, dictates, and precepts of Islam.⁹ However, these laws and precepts had been evolved for communities where the bulk of the people were Muslims. No theoretical framework existed at the time for a state where the bulk of the subjects were non-Muslim, even though the ruler was a Muslim.¹⁰ Hasan demonstrates how the rulers, right from Iltutmish (1211-36) onwards, had to grapple with this practical reality. Gradually with the integration of non-Muslim village headman, landholders, and revenue officials and cultivators into the administrative system there appears to have emerged a relationship of interdependence and conflict between these groups and the sultans. This was because as the government regulations brought peace and prosperity to the cultivators (which was beneficial to the sultans as well), they

⁸ See Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam: India 1200-1800* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004). Also see discussion of Michael Bednar's critique of Aziz Ahmad's categorisation of Indic and Islamic literary traditions into "epics of resistance," and "epics of conquest" respectively in chapter 2.

⁹ S. Nurul Hasan, "Aspects of State and Religion in Medieval India," I.H. Qureshi Memorial Lectures delivered in 1991 at St. Stephan's College, Delhi in Satish Chandra (ed.) *Religion, State and Society in Medieval India: Collected Works of S. Nurul Hasan* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 64.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

frequently resisted the appropriation of surplus by the state.¹¹ A similar relationship emerged with the chieftain, the *rājās*, *rāis*, and others, as the state depended on them for military support, the maintenance of law and order in the countryside and the collection of revenue. But in the event of a rebellion the state had to take hostile action against them. In any case, it was in the interest of the sultans not to risk bigotry and intolerance or impose *sharī'a* law on these chieftains by force.¹²

Peter Hardy has also questioned the notion that exists in the colonial and nationalist writings on the Delhi Sultanate that the essential nature of Islamic rule was a violent and destructive one and was only checked due to the numbers of the invaders being relatively small compared to the local population.¹³ This notion implicitly assumes, according to Hardy, that there could be no meeting of minds between the invaders and invaded, particularly during the period of the conquest and establishment of what eventually became the Delhi Sultanate. According to this idea, the Ghoriid conquerors and the early Delhi Sultans could only have enjoyed 'power' and 'influence' over the non-Muslims, rather than 'authority,' that is, the enjoyment of voluntary cooperation.¹⁴ Hardy examines the Persian texts from this period and notes that for their writers the 'fact' rather than the 'mode' of submission was more important and therefore it is not easy to find evidence for the behaviour of the different *rāis* and *rājās*.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 68-69.

¹² Ibid., p. 69.

¹³ Peter Hardy, "Growth of Authority Over a Conquered Political Élite: Early Delhi Sultanate as a Possible Case Study," in John Richards, *Kingship*, p. 217.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Yet, building on the circumstantial evidence, he finds that the authority of the Sultans was gradually accepted around Delhi by Balban's reign (1266-1287) and they were normally obeyed when they made demands on the population of the Doāb region between the Ganges and the Jumna and the areas of Punjab and the west of the rivers of Sutlej and Beas. Thus, on many occasions when they were preoccupied with their most formidable enemies, the Mongols, they were not simultaneously harassed by the Rajputs. However, Hardy goes on to suggest that whether or not such obedience by the chieftains expressed recognition of power or authority, it was limited in time and space and that the ambiguities of the situation in fact were a reflection of the reality; Muslims chiefs acted as if they had some authority over the Hindu chiefs, and Hindu chiefs when they could, acted as if they had no authority.¹⁵ Provided Muslim conquerors offered certain public signs that they were not going to introduce a wholly new language or vocabulary of politics, but were rather adding new words to the stock of existing words or new layers of meaning to old words, the conquered chieftains would be ready to converse and negotiate.¹⁶

Thus, in the same essay, Hardy goes on to examine the language of the Hindu and Muslim traditions of governance in this period. As far as the broader frameworks of kingship and governance were concerned, the two 'great traditions' shared a number of similarities. Both traditions, for example, saw the need for a divine or transcendental sanction for the governance of human society. Transcendent authority, divine command (*sharī'a*) or the general moral order of the cosmos (*dharma*), specify the requirement of government and provide the

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 219.

¹⁶ Ibid.

ground of its authority.¹⁷ Yet, despite the homologies between the Sanskrit and Persian traditions there were a number of differences. Both traditions recognised the authority of certain texts that spoke of the moral order that a government was to preserve. For the guidance in this task, in a normative context, the rulers were to turn to those who had the authoritative knowledge of these texts.

Likewise, both traditions shared common views on the role of the king as the protector and preserver of the moral order and the one who had the right to mete out punishment. However, Hardy finds that in this regard the two traditions may have differed considerably in their understanding of the actual position of the king in the earthly domain. For instance, while the Hindu texts view the king as partially descending from Viṣṇu, and reintegrating the units of his kingdom in order to maintain the cosmic balance, the Islamic traditions that the Delhi Sultans inherited constantly reminded the king or *pādshāh* that he was created by the supreme, formless being, the Creator and had no divine status of his own.¹⁸

At the level of practice, again, the differences between Hindu and Muslim traditions were not particularly stark. The impositions of new rule due to success in battle also did not necessarily mean the immediate promulgations of entirely new measures.¹⁹ Similarly, the system of indirect rule through the collection of tribute from a defeated chieftain, rather than the complete confiscation, proposed in the *Arthaśāstra* and followed in India, were not entirely alien to the Ghaznavid rulers who from the days of Maḥmūd of Ghaza received (irregular) tribute from the defeated *rājās* of India. Mu'izz al-dīn Muḥammad bin Sām is also said to have

¹⁷ Ibid., 221.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 224-225.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 229.

set up similar tributary relations with Ajmer after the defeat of Pṛthvīrāja in 1192 and also with Gwalior and the Anhilvada kingdom.²⁰ Hardy's essay thus articulates the dialogic aspect that characterised the early phase of Islamic rule over India, in which the rulers and the ruled learnt to negotiate one another's political traditions. These, as Hardy demonstrates, were different but not entirely alien from one another and not necessarily imposed by force.²¹

Writing about a somewhat different context of the Vijayanagara and Bahmani kingdoms, Phillip Wagoner and Richard Eaton also find that by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries most of the Deccan had been integrated into wider Islamic networks.²² Wagoner has proposed the theoretical model of 'Islamisation' which involved the indigenous political elite of a region participating in the more 'universal' culture in order to enhance its prestige. This was done primarily through the adoption of an Islamic 'secular culture' rather than the religious culture of Islam and did not necessarily occur at the expense of the indigenous cultural traditions.²³ This was articulated in the Vijayanagara kingdom through the adoption of a certain courtly etiquette, particularly in the courtly dress and headgear that was popular all over the wider Islamic world. It was

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 230-231.

²¹ Similar issues of negotiation and accommodation seemed to have continued to animate the interaction between Islamic and Hindu political cultures in the later period as well. Hiroyuki Kotani, for example, focuses on the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to discuss similar questions about how the nature of Islamic and Hindu kingship were viewed at the popular level in the subcontinent. See Hiroyuki Kotani, "Kingship, State and Locality in the Seventeenth-to-Nineteenth Century Deccan with Special Reference to Ritual Function," in Karashima, ed., *Kingship in Early Indian History*, pp. 237-271.

²² Phillip B. Wagoner, "Sultan among the Hindu Kings": Dress, Titles, and the Islamization of Hindu Culture at Vijayanagara," *Journal of Asian Studies*, 55, 4 (1996): 851-880 and Richard M. Eaton, "The Articulation of Islamic Space in the Medieval Deccan," in his *Essays on Islam and Indian History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 159-175.

²³ Wagoner, *Sultan*, p. 854.

similarly articulated through the adoption of the title '*hiṃdūrāya suratrāṇa*' or 'Sultan among/of Hindu kings.'²⁴ For Wagoner, the adoption of this title did not indicate a mere homologous connection with the Sanskrit or Telugu equivalent for king but signified, on the part of the Vijayanagara ruler, a willingness to participate in the political discourse of the Islamicate civilisation; he could thus be considered a 'sultan,' not in terms of political standing, but in actual form and substance.²⁵ Thus Wagoner finds that the kingdom of Vijayanagara, traditionally viewed by historians as the bastion of high 'Hindu' culture, was, in fact, closely connected, in its material and courtly cultures, to the wider Islamic world.

Eaton goes further to compare the Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagara to the Islamicate Bahmani Kingdom. Both, as he demonstrates, were successor states of the Delhi Sultanate. Consequently, their political ideologies appear similar as they had a shared history of association and separation from Delhi and were influenced deeply by the ideology propagated by the 'Mirror of kings' literature introduced in India through Turkish rule.²⁶ He finds, however, that in the case of sacred spaces and in the religious sphere, the two kingdoms retained a number of significant differences.²⁷ The similarities between the Islamicate Bahmani Kingdom and the Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagara thus reflect the dialogic rather than purely confrontational relationship of political Islam with indigenous political traditions, right from the early years of the Delhi Sultanate. They also illustrate how the Islamicate cultural practices that emerged in the regional kingdoms provided

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 861-868.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 863.

²⁶ Eaton, "Islamic Space," pp. 160-161.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 166-175.

another form of cosmopolitanism, which was to be adopted, just as Sanskrit, to assert power and authority.

But what of the Islamic political traditions adopting aspects of the pre-existing Indic traditions? If, as Wagoner, Eaton, and others before them suggest, one aspect of the 'Islamisation' of the subcontinent was that this did not occur at the expense of the indigenous traditions, then how, if at all, were these in turn adopted by the Islamicate elites? What could this adoption signify *vis-à-vis* the local indigenous elites, such as the conquered or tribute-paying chieftains? The Islamic political traditions, as the foregoing discussion has shown, were not 'imposed' on India by force by the rulers. As Hardy's essay shows, the rulers of Delhi had to gradually negotiate the political traditions that were already prevalent in the region during the early part of their reign. In the regional context too we find similar negotiations as Sheikh's work has shown.

The record of Sanskrit inscriptions from north India, and particularly from Gujarat from the thirteenth century, testify to the fact that the language did not meet its demise after the establishment of Muslim rule in India.²⁸ Non-Muslim merchants, their wives, officials and often even Muslim nobles chose to use Sanskrit in their inscriptions. In these, the sultans were mentioned with titles and adjectives that were part of the same pool of idiomatic resources that authors of poems and *praśastis* used. In Gujarat itself, numerous inscriptions recording the deeds of locally powerful elites note the reign of the Delhi and Gujarati sultans by using such titles. For instance, an inscription in the Starāmbhan-Parśvanātha temple at Khambhat (Cambay) records the construction of a *poṣadhaśālā* and a temple

²⁸ See, for instance, Pushpa Prasad, *Sanskrit Inscriptions of the Delhi Sultanate, 1192-1526* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990).

dedicated to *ajitadeva tirthanakara*. The grant has been made by a Jain merchant named *sāh jesal* of the *ukeśavamśa*, mentions that it was made “in the victorious reign of Alp Khān” (*śrīalpakhānavijayarājye*), the governor of Anhilvada under ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Khaljī. The latter is described by the Sanskrit term “the one whose power pervades the earth.”²⁹ Similarly, a memorial stone from Junagadh district, gives the name of the Tughluq official, *mahāmalik śrīmamad sadīk* (Sādīk) before that of the Cuḍāsamā king, a certain *rāula Mahipāladeva*, son of *śrī Jayasīrṃha*.³⁰ There are numerous examples of such inscriptions all over Gujarat that incorporate the Islamic rulers in Sanskritised terms.

Alternatively, Sanskrit and Sanskritised terminology seem to have been adopted by the sultanate officials in their inscriptions as well. Thus, the Sanskrit portion of a bilingual inscription from Petlad records the grant of 20 *kubhās* of land and repairs of a step-well, during the “victorious reign of sultan Gīyāsādīn (Ghiyasuddin Tughluq), the king among kings who ruled in Yogiṇipura” (*yogiṇipurādhiṣṭha-mahārājādhirāja-śrīmat-surtrāṇaśrīgīyāsādīnavijayarājye*).³¹ The grant has been made by the consent of the official or *adhikārī* of the *Petilā-padra-maṇḍala* (Petlad), a certain Badradīn (Badrūddīn) Abbuk Ahmad Koh, by the order of the *diwān* of Anhilvada, who had been appointed by the victorious reign of Sultan Ghiyas-al-din in Delhi.

Similarly, an inscription at the Māṇḍavi step-well in Champaner dating from c. 1500 records the grant of land for a step-well, as well as mosque, and a

²⁹ Acharya, *HIG*, IV, 2, pp. 3-4

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

³¹ Acharya, *HIG*, 2, pp. 7-8. Prasad’s collection of numerous Sanskrit inscriptions existed all over north India and many of them incorporated names and praises of the Delhi Sultans who were ruling at the time.

mausoleum in Sanskrit, interspersed with a few grammatical forms from medieval Gujarati and certain terms from Persian. The inscription begins with salutations to Gaṇeśa and Śārādā (or Sarasvatī) and goes on to declare,³²

One who makes the provision of water on the earth even in one foot-step of (a) cow, will go to Śiva's world for sixty thousand years.

Hail, in *samvat* year 1554, in *śaka* 1419 when the sun is in *uttarāyaṇa* in the winter season in the *pauṣa* month, in the first fortnight (*śuklapakṣa*), fifth date, on Thursday (*gurūdine*), during *śatabhiṣā* constellation coinciding [with] *saṁdhyāgni* and *bālava karaṇa*, in Pāvaka fort, city of Mahamadāvāda alias Champaner, during the victorious reign of *pātasāha śrī śrī śrī śrī śrī śrī śrī* Sultan Mahamūda.

Jyotiṣi Vijayādita writes, Malik Saṁdala Sultānī ... may there be well being and auspiciousness. The land which could be cultivated by two ploughs (*hala*), which is the revenue of the kingdom of (the) Sultan is given in donation (*vakaf*) for the sake of step-well (*vāvi*), mosque (*masīta*), and mausoleum (*hajīrā*). This two-plough land is given as per the civil regulations (*dīvānī*).

One who violates the black-field as black as the goddess *kālī* will be guilty (*doṣi*). The *puṇya* will be life long.³³

Both these inscriptions are interesting examples of how Sanskrit could be written incorporating terms that may have been in current use like *vakaf* (*waqf*) the Persian word for donation or *diwan* (governor) or *diwani*, the accepted word for certain government regulations in the region. Further, the records draw on pre-existing inscription-writing traditions. The Māṇḍavi step-well inscription, for instance, invokes the Puranic gods at the start and makes a note of the threat of a curse at the end in the event of a violation. The term *hala* or plough used in this inscription

³² V.H. Sonawane, "Māṇḍavī Step-well Inscription at Cāmpānera, Samvat - 1554, śaka - 1419," *JOI*, XXI, 3 (1972): 223-227.

³³ I have modified Sonawane's translation in certain places as per my preferred interpretation of the Sanskrit text. I have also chosen to mention some of the phrases from the original language in the citation as these give a clearer sense of the terms that were used.

as a measure of land was also used extensively in the Caulukya inscriptions.³⁴ Similarly, the threat of the goddess Kālī to anyone who violates the donation can be located within the popular mythology of the Pavagadh locality itself, as this was one of the most important sites of goddess worship in Gujarat. All these devices drawn from Puranic and local mythology, it must be emphasised, have been used in this inscription for the purpose of recording structures and associated with Islamic worship.³⁵

The *Rājavinoda* remains something of a curiosity to those who have commented on it, as it is a biography of a Muslim sultan who is portrayed in the garb of what appears to be a 'Hindu' king. However, inscriptions such as the ones discussed above indicate that these terms were in current use in the various literary domains of the region. In this regard, the *Rājavinoda* does not appear to be an anomaly, but can be located instead within these continuing traditions that spoke of the sultans as the dominant rulers of the region. However, before moving on to an analysis of this aspect of the text, in the following section I discuss the figure of its protagonist, Sultan Muḥmūd Begadā, in history and legend.

SULTAN MAḤMŪD BEGAḌĀ (1458-1511)

When Fateh Khān came to the throne as Sultan Maḥmūd in 1458, the Gujarati Sultans had already been in power in the region for nearly a century.³⁶ Under Ṣafar Khān, the process of controlling and conquering the locally powerful chieftains

³⁴ See Sonawane, "Māṇḍavī Step-well Inscription," p. 225. The editor of the inscription in fact traces the origins of the benedictory verse to the thirteenth-century Caulukya text, *Aparājītapṛccha*. See note 4, p. 226.

³⁵ The spiritual benefit accrued from making a grant of a source of water is acknowledged in both Hindu and Muslim traditions.

³⁶ Also see note 1, Chapter 3.

had begun (Chapter 2). His successors Sultans Aḥmad (1411-1442) and Muḥammad (Chapter 3) were also constantly on the move in attempts to ensure the successful collection of tribute and to secure trade routes, which were the lifeblood of their control over the region.³⁷ With Aḥmad, attempts to eliminate the constant recalcitrance of the chieftains by launching large-scale campaigns against them had also been initiated. In 1416, after his campaigns against the chieftains of Saurashtra, he destroyed the Śaiva temple at Siddhpur and established a mosque in its place, an act conducted perhaps to reinforce his political position in the region.³⁸ Despite being constantly on the move, Aḥmad also built a number of fortifications, particularly around the hilly terrain bordering the Malwa territories, and invested in the development of the city of Ahmedabad, which he had founded in 1413.

Further, Aḥmad was also responsible for enforcing important administrative measures that laid the foundations of the Sultans becoming the most generous and powerful employers of military manpower, thus securing their power base in the region.³⁹ Thus, as the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* describes, Aḥmad introduced a regular system of payment for his soldiers where half their salary was to be paid out of a *jāgir* and the other half was to be given to them in cash.⁴⁰ The author narrates:

³⁷ See Sheikh, *State and Society*, particularly, chapters 2 and 5.

³⁸ S.C. Misra views this attack on Siddhpur as “a wanton act of vandalism” and attributes it to the Sultan’s desire to accrue religious merit. See Misra, *Rise*, p. 175. Richard Eaton’s path breaking study of temple desecrations in India has shown how most of these acts by Islamic rulers were driven by political rather than religious motives and Ahmad and his successors were no different in this regard. See Richard M. Eaton, “Temple Desecration and Indo-Muslim States,” in his *Essays on Islam*, pp. 94-132.

³⁹ Sheikh, *State and Society*, p. 130.

⁴⁰ Ali Muḥammad Khān, MA, trans., p. 39 and Sheikh, *State and Society*, pp. 132-133.

If the complete salary is paid in cash, there will not remain any surplus with him [the soldier]. A soldier will be without any means. He will become careless in his defense of the kingdom. If half out of revenue produce is assigned to him as salary, he will derive benefit in the shape of grass, fuel, etc. from that mahal ... Half in cash will be conveyed to him every month without delay and waiting so that he may remain present wherever he may be for receiving it.⁴¹

This mode of payment was also aimed at the soldiers avoiding debt and ensuring their families' security while they were in battle. Thus, the measures secured the wellbeing of the soldiers in order that they would remain loyal to the crown.

Similarly, the *Mirat-i-Aḥmadi* attributes the introduction of the *vanṭā* system of revenue collection from the territories of the local chieftains to Aḥmad Shāh.⁴² Like the payment to the soldiers, this system also worked towards incorporating the chieftains within the system of administration and government. Thus, the *vanṭā* or 'part' was to be one-fourth of the territories that the chieftain had formerly controlled. The other three fourths, assigned the title 'tulput' were acknowledged as the 'property of the king.'⁴³ These chieftains, or zamindars, as they were known in the Persian writings, were responsible for the protection of their own villages and were also to make themselves available in the military service of the king, when so required.⁴⁴

As these people, without paying obedience to the prince, did not see it possible to establish themselves, they attended to make their submission, and engaged to pay the crown a *sulāmee* (salami) from their Wāntā; from this time the *sulāmee* and *paishkush* became established against them.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 39.

⁴² Sheikh, *State and Society*, p. 136.

⁴³ See *ibid.* and Forbes, *Rās Mālā*, vol. 2, p. 270.

⁴⁴ Forbes, *Rās Mālā*, vol. 2, pp. 270-71.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 271.

Apart from this revenue arrangement, those chieftains who were not alienated from their lands, paid tribute from the their *grās*, which was an annual payment, usually extracted by force. The Sultans did not usually interfere with the internal administration of these territories and they were allowed to collect revenues from their lands.⁴⁶

Like his predecessors, Sultan Maḥmūd was involved in major military campaigns. As noted at the outset, he was victorious over the kingdoms of Junagadh and Champaner and several other parts of the region.⁴⁷ He aided the Bahamani Sultans against their common rival, the Sultan of Malwa, on several occasions. However, Maḥmūd also built extensively on the administrative foundations laid by his grandfather and continued by his father, Muḥammad. During Maḥmūd's reign, courtiers were encouraged to administer the territories granted to them as military assignments from where they were expected to raise troops. Alternatively, a paid official would be stationed at the principal town or fort to administer it and collect revenues with the support of troops from Ahmedabad.⁴⁸ In addition, military outposts, or *thānās*, were set up in the charge of subordinate officers who were responsible for raising local levies.⁴⁹ Such an administrative system ensured the successful collection of revenues, at least in the areas where the traditional chieftains had been alienated from their lands and integrated them into the wider system of government. Further, Maḥmūd introduced the measure of assigning the *jāgirs* of the

⁴⁶ Sheikh, *State and Society*, p. 137.

⁴⁷ One of the main reasons behind undertaking this campaign at this time seems to have been the that around c. 1482, the rains had failed all over the region, except in Champaner. The officer stationed in the nearby *thānā* thus began to plunder Champaner but was unable to successfully sustain the attack and the Sultan was forced to intervene. See Sikandar, *MS*, trans, pp. 64-65. Also, note 8 above.

⁴⁸ Sheikh, *State and Society*, p. 137.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

nobles and soldiers who were slain in battle to their sons; if there was no son, half the property was to be assigned to the daughters. In the absence of a daughter, settlements were to be made with the dependents of the deceased.⁵⁰ As with the measure of paying soldiers partly in cash and partly by the assignment of a *jāgir*, this move was intended to reduce any dissatisfaction towards the ruler and develop long-term roots on the lands.

In addition to this, migrations and settlements, not only of pastoralist groups but also of mercenary soldiers who had accompanied the Turkish invaders, cultivators, traders, religious groups like various denominations of Brahmins, *ṣūfī* saints, and *Ismā'īlī* preachers, among others, were continuously taking place at least from the thirteenth century onwards.⁵¹ Such migrations were accompanied by the flourishing of a variety of religious cults that coexisted in the region despite being from the divergent *bhaktī* and *ṣūfī* ideologies. Shrines and pilgrimage sites associated with these also simultaneously flourished. Samira Sheikh discusses the process by which diverse social elements, including the sultans, came to express their social identities through the patronage of the numerous religious cults that flourished in the region. The balance between these cults and shrines of different orientations would always be, she notes, a negotiated one, and sometimes even a precarious one.⁵² But the sultans played a central role in ensuring peace and prosperity, and opened up new economic vistas by keeping the trade routes pacified. As long as they successfully managed to do this, what she calls the "ever-burgeoning religious marketplace would sing their praises and would remain a peaceful one reflecting a political consensus

⁵⁰ Sikandar, MS, trans, p. 45.

⁵¹ Samira Sheikh, *State and Society*, pp. 65-66.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 174.

between social groups that made up the sultanate.”⁵³ All these integrative measures had facilitated the forging of Gujarat as a region, which reached the heights of its prosperity under Sultan Maḥmūd Begadā.

The figure of Sultan Maḥmūd Begadā is something of a legend in the history and popular memory of Gujarat. In addition to his successful military conquests, he is remembered for a larger than life personality and extraordinary feats. One explanation for the epithet ‘Begadā’ is derived, as noted in the previous chapter, from his victory over the formidable forts of Champaner and Junagadh.⁵⁴ However, Sikandar also mentions another, and more fantastic, belief about the title, popular when he was writing during the seventeenth century. In Gujarati, notes Sikandar, the term referred to a bullock whose horns stretch horizontally forward “in the manner of a person extending his arms to embrace another” the Sultan’s moustache was so thick and long, it they resembled such a bullock’s horns.⁵⁵ Maḥmūd was also associated with fabulous dietary and sexual habits. He was known to consume enormous quantities of food; it was rumoured that after his regular meal he would eat “five seers of parched rice as dessert” and ask for two plates full of *samosas* to be kept on either side of his bed, which he could then eat when he got up from his sleep during the night, and at breakfast he would drink a cup of Mecca honey, a cup of *ghee* (clarified butter), and eat a hundred and fifty plantains.⁵⁶ His sexual appetite was similarly voracious and it was said the women of his own country were too weak for

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ See note 40, Chapter 3.

⁵⁵ Sikandar b. Muḥammad, MS, trans., p. 42. Ali Muḥammad Khān, the author of the *Mirat-i-Aḥmadi* also mentions these legends related to the Sultan but his account is derived, as he himself acknowledges, from Sikandar’s work. See his *Mirat-i-Aḥmadi. A Persian History of Gujarat. Translated from the Persian Original of Ali Muḥammad Khān*. M. F. Lokhandwala, trans (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1965), p. 45.

⁵⁶ Sikandar b. Muḥammad, MS, trans, p. 42.

him and “after cohabitation with his several wives, he used to derive satisfaction only from a young and strapping Abyssinian lass”.⁵⁷ The Sultan was indeed known to have a large harem and numerous wives, most of whom were daughters of the chieftains who had accepted his authority. In fact, the sultans of Gujarat primarily contracted marriage alliances with such chieftains and a branch of their own family in Nagaur, thus reflecting their regional status and the efforts to incorporate the local elite into the administrative system.⁵⁸

Further, the Sultan was believed to have been supported by the spiritual blessings of the saint, Shāh Ālam from his early childhood, that came to his aid against his enemies on several occasions. Maḥmūd's mother, Bibi Mughlī, had taken shelter in her sister, Bībī Turkī's home after her husband, Sultan Muḥammad's death, as the latter's older son, Jalāl Khān, came to the throne adopting the title of Qutb-u'd-Dīn Aḥmad II in 1451. Bībī Turkī was Shāh Ālam's wife, and as young boy Fateh Khān grew up under the saint's protection. The new sultan was jealous of his step-brother, Fateh Khān, particularly due to the favours that the saint granted the latter and made several attempts to have him killed. These attempts, however, were thwarted thanks to the miraculous powers of the saint who once transformed the boy into an old man and on another occasion

⁵⁷ Sikandar, *MS*, trans., p. 42. The seventeenth century English poet, Samuel Butler, was so taken up by such legends about the Sultan, brought to Europe by the Portuguese, that he even wrote of him in his long satirical poem, *Hudibras*:

“The Prince of Cambay's (Maḥmūd's) daily food
Is asp, and basilisk, and toad.
Which makes him have so strong a breath,
Each night he stinks a queen to death ...”

⁵⁸ Also see Sheikh, *State and Society*, pp. 143-144 and “Alliance.”

into a girl in order to protect him from his rival.⁵⁹ Tales of the Sultan's piety and dedication to other Islamic saints of the region are also legendary.

The Sultan's personal piety, however, is also known to have pervaded his political actions. His conquest of Junagadh is recorded as being strongly motivated by religion rather than by the desire for mere political and economic gains. Thus, even after Rā Māṇḍalika offered his submission and said,

Whatever service the Sultan may command, this slave will be ready to perform with his life. Without my having committed any fault, why do you endeavour to ruin me?⁶⁰

The Sultan's response was,

What crime is greater than infidelity! If you desire safety, acknowledge the unity of God, and become a Musalaman with a true heart that I may trust you with other dominions in addition to your own, else I will destroy you.⁶¹

Similarly, when he was advised by his nobles to launch an attack on Malwa, after Sultan Maḥmūd Khalji's death in c. 1469, he said, "To covet the country of a brother Mohammudan, whether he be dead or alive is a crime."⁶²

In addition to his piety, the Sultan is remembered for his building activities, love for gardens and horticulture, as well as music. The remains of the city of Muḥammadābād built after the conquest of Champaner still stand as testimony to his patronage of architecture. The city was built with an outer wall, a Jami masjid and other mosques, and several other buildings. Sikandar writes that an expert from Khurasan was commissioned to lay out the garden on the outskirts of the city in which were placed fountains and cascades, a skill that was previously

⁵⁹ Sikandar, *MS*, trans., pp. 36-38.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 69. Also see, Ahmad, *MA*, trans, p. 47.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Sikandar, *MS*, trans, p. 69.

unknown in Gujarat.⁶³ The *Mirat-i-Sikandari's* history of Maḥmūd is in fact interspersed with long descriptions of gardens and orchards in the region, including the lists of specific plants and trees grown. Maḥmūd was so attached to road-side trees, according to the author, that he would even award prizes to anyone who planted them. He also ensured the availability of water in areas of scarcity so that the trees could be looked after.⁶⁴ He was also known to have been concerned with the welfare of the cultivators, which led to the great prosperity of his kingdom where the revenues had increased ten-fold, "the income of no village being less than double or treble its former revenue."⁶⁵ Further, he ensured the safety of the travellers and built a number of *sarais* or rest houses, which facilitated mercantile activities and trade. Maḥmūd was also well known for his musical taste and skill. A number of Indo-Persian accounts of music patronage in the Muẓaffarshāhi court of Gujarat contain several musical tracts attributed to him and his son, who was a particularly keen patron of the art and a skilled musician.⁶⁶

Sultan Maḥmūd Begadā's is thus remembered in history and legend for bringing prosperity and stability to the kingdom and on many occasions for his

⁶³ Sikandar, MS, trans, p. 69.

⁶⁴ Ibid., MS, p.47.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 45.

⁶⁶ For more on the patronage of music under the sultans of Gujarat, see Muḥammad Umar Kokil, "Gujarātnā Sultānonā Samaymā Saṅgīt" (Music During the Time of the Sultans of Gujarat), FGST, book 3, vol. 3 (1938): 394-400. Also, see Françoise 'Nalini' Delvoye, "Indo-Persian Texts on Music Patronage in the Sultanate of Gujarat," in Muzaffar Alam, Françoise 'Nalini' Delvoye, and M. Gaborieu, eds, *Confluence of Cultures: French Contributions to Indo-Persian Studies* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 264-66 and Françoise Delvoye, "Music Patronage in the Sultanate of Gujarat: A Survey of Sources," in P. van der Velde and A. McKay, eds, *New Developments in Asian Studies: An Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 346.

piety and promotion of Islam. The *Rājavinodamahākāvya*m, a product of his reign and in fact, offered by the poet at his court, presents yet another picture of the sultan, that of universal king, resembling several figures from Puranic mythology. The next section explores this somewhat unusual representation of the Islamicate king.

THE SULTAN AS A 'KSHATRIYA' KING

The few modern scholars who have written about Udayarāja's *Rājavinodamahākāvya*m have labelled it a 'unique' text, primarily due to its exaggerated praises of a Muslim sultan known for his dedication to Islam in the idiom of Hindu kingship.⁶⁷ Yet hitherto there have been no translations of the text into English or Gujarati and no detailed analytical studies of it either. The only manuscript of the text available today is one acquired by Georg Bühler in 1875 for the Government of Bombay and housed at the Prince of Wales Museum, where the Dohad stone inscription is also preserved. The date of the composition is not specified in the poem but on the basis of the last military expedition of the Sultan to the Deccan and Malwa mentioned in the text it has been suggested that it was composed after his accession to the throne in 1458 and probably not earlier than c. 1469. The poet also tells us very little about himself except the names of his father

⁶⁷ P.K Gode, in his essay on the date of the poet Udayarāja, cites Bühler's note on the manuscript: "The *Rājavinoda* ... is quite a literary curiosity. The author ... celebrates Mahmud popularly reported to have been the most violent persecutor of the Hindus and Hinduism as if he were an orthodox Hindu King." Gode, "Dates," p. 102.

and his guru.⁶⁸ The *mahākāvya* is described, however, as a “pleasant offering of flowers of verses” made by him to the Sultan.⁶⁹

The *Rājavinoda* is in seven *sargas*, each with an individual title and varying number of verses.⁷⁰ As in the *Māṇḍalikānṛpacarita*, here too, the narrative is centred on the king and his activities, rather than a single battle or a series of events. However, in the *Rājavinoda* the Sultan’s court appears to be the primary focus of the poet’s representation of him; it is a near-divine space to which we are introduced right at the beginning of the composition. In this regard the poet does not appear to tell a story chronologically, but seems instead to be capturing different points in the life of the Sultan, as was often the case in epic-style *kāvya* works.⁷¹

As the story of Raṇmall and the Sanskrit narratives from Champaner and Junagadh demonstrated, the representations of Muslims in the Indic literary narratives were multiple and often referred to their ethnic origins rather than their religious affiliations. Derogatory representations of these groups also acted as a useful foil against which the virtues of the protagonist could be highlighted. Similarly, from the inscriptions from north India and Gujarat in the second millennium discussed above, it is possible to suggest, as B.D. Chattopadhyaya has also done, that new forms of authority represented by the sultans, were incorporated within the ideological and literary conventions of the textual

⁶⁸ These are given as Prayāgadāsa and Rāmadāsa respectively. Udayarāja, *Rājavinodamahākāvya* (hence forth RVMK), G.N. Bahura, ed. (Jaipur: Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, 1954), VII.41, p. 22. This is also the only entry found against his name in Theodore Aufrecht, *Catalogus catalogorum*, part 1 (Weisbaden: E.J. Brill, 1962), p. 65.

⁶⁹ RVMK, I.4, p. 1.

⁷⁰ The first *sarga* consists of 29 verses while the seventh and last one is made up of 43 verses. The rest of the *sargas* fall within this range.

⁷¹ A.K. Warder, *Indian Kāvya Literature*, vol. 1 (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1972), p. 169.

productions of the times. Thus, the use of Sanskrit terms such as *nṛpa* (king), *kṣonīpati* (lord of the earth), or even *cakravartin* (paramount king) to describe the sultan of *mleccha* or *yavana* descent may be seen to fit into the pre-existing convention of rule, and “if there was a new element or trait associated with his rule, it had to be modified as to conform to this convention.”⁷² Apart from these general terms of kingship, Chattopadhyaya also notes that Sanskrit literary texts and inscriptions Sanskritised individual names and mentioned the specific qualities that these rulers were seen to be upholding. In one inscription, the sultan of Delhi, Sikandar Lodi, for instance, was represented as having acquired his wealth by adhering to the correct principles or *nyāyenopārjita*.⁷³ In addition to this, Chattopadhyaya notes that the modification of the title Sultan to *suratrāṇa* gave it the literal meaning of “Saviour of Gods.”⁷⁴ Thus, Chattopadhyaya’s study shows how the Muslim rulers were incorporated into the familiar vocabularies of rule and literary convention.

However, the literary texts and inscriptions that Chattopadhyaya cites emerge from non-Islamic courts in which chieftains appear to be gradually accepting the sultans and later the Mughals as the unquestionable paramount authority. The *Rājavinoda*, on the other hand, is a Sanskrit *caritra* or biography, most likely patronised by the Islamic Sultan himself or at least presented to him by a poet who had access to his court. Its production in this patronage context, I suggest, points to the power of Sanskrit and the literary tropes it afforded to an ambitious monarch irrespective of his religious inclination. The Dohad *praśasti*,

⁷² Chattopadhyaya, *Representing*, p. 51.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

patronised by one of the Sultan's courtiers further substantiates this point. As I noted in the previous chapter, the sultans of Gujarat had access to Persian as well as Gujarī, a regional courtly language that developed under their rule. Despite the existence of these languages of power, the patronage of a Sanskrit panegyric suggests that Maḥmūd also sought the prestige that this important and well-recognised language could grant him. In the sections that follow, I analyse the *Rajavinoda's* representations of Maḥmūd with the aim of further exploring how this literary narrative may have worked to enhance this ambitious ruler's position in the regional context.

1. The Court and its King

By the fifteenth century, the courtly ethos that developed with the emergence of new political systems from the Gupta period had become an integral part of the ruling houses all over India. The codes that defined the culture and practices of the court, however, were not static and were interpreted according to the changes in the political context. In the case of Gujarat, we not only find the use of courtly literature or *kāvya* in the smaller chieftaincies but also the *Rājavinoda*, dedicated to the regional Sultan, draws extensively from this tradition.

A striking feature of Udayarāja's panegyric to Maḥmūd is indeed the grandeur of his court. While Gaṅgadāsa and Māṇḍalika are associated with a variety of courtly rituals (and Raṇmall has no court at all), the Sultan's court is described as a semi-divine space in which the displays of erudition, wealth, and magnificence are of a fantastic nature. For Udayarāja, his patron's court is far superior even to that of Indra, the king of the gods. His panegyric to Maḥmūd begins with the *surendrasaraswatisamvāda* or the dialogue between Sarasvatī, the Puranic goddess

of learning and music and Indra. Sarasvatī or Brahmi as she is often referred to in the poem, appears to have descended upon the earth from her heavenly abode. She is the daughter of the creator, Brahma, and her father is concerned about her whereabouts.⁷⁵ Brahma has sent Indra to look for her and as he wanders from street to street, he is surprised to find her sporting with the scholars at the court/temple (*mandira*) of the noble Maḥmūda. He asks her why she has given up the pleasures of eloquence in Brahma's world (*brahmhaloka*) and has chosen instead to entertain herself on the earth.⁷⁶ The goddess responds with elaborate praises of the Sultan's court, which is not only the home of prosperity, but is also endowed with a "council of the most learned of men"⁷⁷ and where the poetic arts billow and pervade the atmosphere freely.⁷⁸ The brilliance of the throne too surpasses that of Indra, Viṣṇu (*kamalāpati*) as well as Kāma (*rativallabha*); the goddess does not wish to return to her heavenly abode. The poem, in fact, begins with a dedication to Sarasvatī and is being recited by her to spread the fame of the Sultan, with the intention to delight many (*pūruhūtakautukārtham*).⁷⁹

The highest form of musical arts and performance accompany the erudition at the court (perhaps due to the permanent presence of the goddess of learning). The poet dedicates an entire *sarga* entitled the "occasion of music performance" (*saṃgītarāṅgaprasaṅga*) to this.⁸⁰ Doe-eyed damsels enter the music hall to the sound of the drums, where various fragrant flowers and the ever-burning incense

⁷⁵ RVMK, I.6, p. 1.

⁷⁶ Ibid., I.11, p. 2.

⁷⁷ Ibid., I.10, p.2, I.11, p. 3.

⁷⁸ Ibid., I.12.

⁷⁹ Ibid., IV.32, p. 11.

⁸⁰ Ibid., V.

fill the atmosphere.⁸¹ The lustre of the royal ceremony of arms is created by the rows of lamps lit in the evening. The reference here appears to be to a kind of military and religious ceremony performed by Kshatriya kings in the month of *aśvina* (monsoon season) before taking to the battle field.⁸² Some of the women play the *viṇā* with proficiency; others play the flute. The sound of the soiree causes the peacock to dance vigorously.⁸³ The court is adorned with hundreds of learned and wise experts of music, who appropriately sing of the king's glories and increase the joys of the courtiers.⁸⁴ The music is accompanied by elaborate dance performances by beautiful women who resemble the creepers from Indra's court.⁸⁵ The pleasing music and dance performances are followed by the Sultan's amorous sports with the beautiful maidens. Maḥmūd's court is thus not only described in the aestheticised language, but it also appears before the reader as an aestheticised performance of pomp and show.

The Sultan around whom these activities are centred is also the "crest jewel among kings" (*rājanyacūḍāmaṇi*) and a god-like hero. Maḥmūd adorns this glorious court, which is blessed equally by the goddess of learning and Lakṣmi, the goddess of wealth. He is himself is endowed with the most exemplary qualities of nobility and is seen as one who never crosses the bounds of morality (*maryādā*).⁸⁶ Thus

In beauty he represents Makaradhvaja (Kāma), in generosity Karṇa
In compassion he appears like Raghunandana, in the battlefield equals
Bhīma
In eloquence he is Vākpati, his charms are like those of Lakṣmīvara
(Viṣṇu)

⁸¹ Ibid., V.2,3, p. 12.

⁸² V.S. Apte, *A Practical English-Sanskrit Dictionary* (Delhi: Motilala Banarasidass, 1998 [1965]), p. 569.

⁸³ RVMK, V.11

⁸⁴ Ibid., V.14, 15, p. 13.

⁸⁵ Ibid., V.18, p. 13.

⁸⁶ Ibid., II.29, p.6.

The people (*prajā*) are forever devoted to lord Mahamūdasāha⁸⁷

Further, a *sarga* entitled the “gathering of the court” (*sabhāsamāgamaḥ*) describes the Sultan’s toilette and entry into the courtly space. This divine king, referred throughout this *sarga* as the lord of the earth (*mahīndra*), is awakened every morning by the pleasurable sound of musical instruments, the neighing of horses, and the pleasurable songs and auspicious verses sung by his wives.⁸⁸ The Sultan’s face, which resembles the reflection of the “moon upon the ocean,” is sprinkled with water and his body is anointed with the perfume from the “deer’s navel” or musk from the mountains in Kashmir (*kuraṅganābhihi śrīkhaṇḍakāśmiravilepanaḥ*).⁸⁹ The air is filled with the fragrance of camphor, while the betel leaf makes the Sultan’s mouth fragrant. Udayarāja goes on to describe his ornaments and physical features. His body appears to be home to the goddess of wealth who embraces his vast chest (*viśāla vakṣasthala*) and resides in his four limbs (*caturaṅga*).⁹⁰ The descriptions continue in a similar vein as the Sultan enters the court under a canopy and ascends the royal throne, where the groups of kings recite his praises and the poets compose verses of his glory.

These descriptions of the court, along with the descriptions of the Sultan’s body, personal beauty, and exaggerated mannerisms were an important aspect of *kāvya* literature. The physical appearance of its members, as Daud Ali has demonstrated, played a significant role in courtly life and is elaborately discussed in texts such as the *Nāṭyaśāstra* as well as literary works such as Bāṇā’s *Harṣacarita*.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Ibid., II.26, p. 5.

⁸⁸ RVMK, III.1, 2, p. 6

⁸⁹ Ibid., III.4, 5.

⁹⁰ Ibid., III.10, 11.

⁹¹ Ali, *Courtly Culture*, p. 144.

Such descriptions of physical traits also made for the king's moral superiority above the rest of the society as well as over his rivals. However, the king was not simply defined by these external features and displays of wealth. His martial and warlike qualities were equally significant, as the *Rājavinoda* also demonstrates. Yet, as Ali points out, while martial values were an integral part of political culture in India right from the Vedic times, "what is significant from the courtly sources in from the Common Era, however, is a striking combination of martial codes and markedly 'irenic' values."⁹² The Vedic notions of sacrifice and the king as the "feeder" of his domains were increasingly replaced by the association of kingship with 'enjoyment' (from the Sanskrit root word *bhoga*) and 'pleasure.'⁹³ These ranged from sensual and mental pleasures to the enjoyment and ownership of property by the king. Thus from Gupta times the political hierarchy was conceived through similar terminology – the king 'enjoying' the entire realm or the earth and his subordinates the smaller domains.⁹⁴

In Udayarāja's representation of his protagonist's court these elements of sensuality and pleasure as forming a part of a king's splendour follow the courtly conventions developed from the Gupta period. The choice of the *caritra* or *mahākāvya* genre can also be seen as a drawing from the same traditions. Such epic-poems, were not historical narratives as such, but as Chattopadhyaya has noted, they were both biographies and not biographies.⁹⁵ They were biographies because they were woven around the life of a historical character but were not biographies because they were not simply intended to record the actual events in

⁹² Ibid., p.96.

⁹³ Ibid., pp. 97-99.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 99.

⁹⁵ Chattopadhyaya, *Representing*, p. 26.

the life of the hero.⁹⁶ The portrayed life was rather a reflection of an ideal reality which had to match the social station of the hero.⁹⁷ For a powerful king like Muḥmūd this included munificence, love, and as the following section will show, descent, valour, and different spheres of conquest.

2. Imagining the King's Domain

As noted, Sultan Maḥmūd is not merely an embodiment of superior physical and moral values but as Udayarāja's protagonist, he also holds multiple titles and roles. The poet imagines him as a king whose influence spreads over a variety of domains. First, he is the descendent of the lord of the Gurjara country (*gurajarakṣamāpati*) and the Gurjara Pātasāha himself. Apart from the long genealogy of the dynasty of the sultans in the narrative, this fact is reiterated at the end of each *sarga* as well. This is also accompanied by the title *mahā rājādhirāja*, 'high king among kings,' asserting his independent status. However, in addition to this, he is also a *cakravartin* or paramount king having mastery over the entire Bharatavarṣa. As the ideal Kshatriya warrior and king he has gained control over the different kingdoms through his own personal prowess. Thus, here too, as in the *GDPVN* and the *MNC*, the poet creates a sense of political geography in which the local and the universal interact closely with each other, if somewhat differently.

The genealogy situates the Sultan, through his predecessors, firmly within the region of Gujarat. In the rest of the narrative, however, we are given few specific details of the region. However, while chieftains like Gaṅgadāsa and

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

Maṇḍalika were only concerned with maintaining their own patrimonies and sovereignty over their little hill kingdoms, for the Sultan his spheres of influence extend to encompass the entire Gurajara region. As the ruler of this important region, Maḥmūd also occupies the position of the 'paramount king,' while chieftains like Raṇmall, Gaṇgadāsa, and Maṇḍalika are only endowed with the more humble title of 'rājā.'

In contrast to the works discussed in the foregoing chapters, the *Rājavinoda* presents us with a lengthy genealogy of its patron. The second *sarga* of the text entitled "declaration of the *vaṃśa*" (*vaṃśānusāṅkīrtanaha*) is dedicated to this genealogy of the Gujarati sultans, which also corresponds closely with the one given in the Dohad stone inscription (but omits some of the rulers mentioned in the Persian works). Udayarāja's genealogy of the Gujarati sultans begins with Muẓaffarshāh and links the rulers with the solar dynasty, thus granting them an authentic Kshatriya status. This claim is not found very often in the texts and inscriptions of the sultans, though Sikandar does narrate the story of their ancestors having once been Hindu 'Tāṅks' who traced their descent from the dynasty of "Rāmacandra whom the Hindus worship as God."⁹⁸ The Tāṅks were expelled from their community, according to Sikandar, because they had taken to drinking wine. Muẓaffar Shāh's father and uncle were influential landholders and had the ability to summon thousands of horsemen and foot soldiers. Consequently, they managed to get service in Tughluq sultan Fīrūz Shāh's retinue, forge a marriage alliance with him, convert to Islam and eventually rose in the courtly ranks.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Sikandar, MS, trans, p. 1.

⁹⁹ Ibid., pp. 1-2.

The *Rājavinoda* does not relate this elaborate account and refers to Ẓafar Khān with the somewhat humble title of “*śrīmāna sāhimudaffarendraḥ*.” However, Ẓafar Khān’s establishment of his independent rule in Gujarat is described as a divine act. Udayarāja writes, “[he] marched from Delhi to assist Kṛṣṇa against Kālī, for the uplift of *gurajaradeśa*.”¹⁰⁰ He similarly borrows from Puranic mythology to describe the sultan’s conquest of Kutch and other parts of the region:

When he washed his blood-stained sword in the waters of the Western seas (*paścimavārirāśau*), after subjugating the land of Kutch, his fame leaped over the ocean to reach the island of Laṅkā, like the great hero, Kapīndra [king of the monkeys, Hanūmāna].¹⁰¹

Ẓafar Khān is also referred to as holding the title of the “liberator of the Malwa king” (*mālavarājabandimokṣa*), whom he had initially defeated and imprisoned.¹⁰² This Malwa king is Alp Khān (here *alpkhāna*), whose alliance Ẓafar Khān had sought after assuming the title of independence; this title is reminiscent of the inscriptions of the Caulukyas, who also seem to have been keen on expressing their victories over the neighbouring kingdom.¹⁰³

Muẓaffar’s son, Muḥammad is praised for the strength of arms, and described as resembling “the lustre of a thousand suns” (*sahastrabhānupratimaha*

¹⁰⁰ RVMK, II.2, p. 3.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. Muẓaffar Shāh seems not to have been adorned with many elaborate titles in the Sanskrit inscriptions from his reign as well. The Veraval stone inscription of c. 1408 refers to him simply as “*śrīdaḥarakhān mudāfarapātsāha*.” See Acharya, *HIG*, IV, p. 15. Similarly, the Dholkā well inscription refers to him simply as “*śrīmadaffarpātsāha*.” However, this long inscription, which records the construction of the step-well, refers to the patron, a certain Sahadeva of the *ṭakṭa* lineage as being the Sultan’s favourite (*pātsāhasya mānyaha*). This Vaiṣṇava family seems to have been involved in the administrative profession for at least three generations and an integral part of the Delhi and Gujarati sultanate governments. See Acharya *HIG*, IV, pp. 16-18. In the Dohad Inscription of Maḥmūd, however, he is called “*nṛpabhūpati*” (king, lord of the earth).

¹⁰² RVMK, II.5, p. 4.

¹⁰³ See Chapter 1.

pratāpa).¹⁰⁴ In addition to this, “the sun of his munificence wipes out the darkness of poverty from the world.”¹⁰⁵ Udayarāja also refers to his march on *Indrasprasta* (Delhi) in order to attack his enemy, a certain *Mallakhāna*¹⁰⁶ and to his conquest over the bear-infested forests of Nandapada (Nandol).¹⁰⁷ From this ocean (Mahmūd) rose the full moon (*pūrnacandra*) of the illustrious *Ahmadendra*. He attacked Hushangshāh’s home at the Mandu (*maṇḍapa*) and also captured the forts of the *Mahāraṣtrapati* by force.¹⁰⁸ He is also seen as being deeply devoted to the people.¹⁰⁹

Giyasadīna or the illustrious Muḥammad (*sāhimahamadendra*) is born from the crest of Aḥmad’s prosperity.¹¹⁰

As the sun lights up the earth by day, the moon spreads its radiance at night
Śrīmahammadanaradhipati illuminates the earth in perpetuity by the light of his fame.¹¹¹

Muḥammad is also associated by Udayarāja with the conquest of Pavagadh or *Pāvakagiri*,¹¹² “By the combined heat of his brilliance he burns the top of the

¹⁰⁴ RVMK, II.8, p. 4. In the Dohad inscription he is only referred to in passing with the title of *mahīpati*. See Sankalia, Dohad stone inscription, verse 3, p. 223.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., II.6, p. 4.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., II.8, p. 4. This could be a reference to the rebellion in Delhi after the Muḥammad Tughluq II’s death during which Imādulmulk became the governor of the province. Muḥammad Shāh Gujarati, much against his father’s wishes, chose to march to Delhi and, like other former nobles of the Sultanate sought to capture the throne.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., II.9, p. 4.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., II.11, p. 4.

¹⁰⁹ In the Dohad inscription Aḥmad is referred to as the “knower of the essence of all religions and thought” (*sarvadharmavicārasārasarvajña*). He also seen as having conquered the lord of Malwa and capturing all his land and wealth. See Sankalia, “Dohad Inscription,” verse 4, p. 223.

¹¹⁰ RVMK, II.14, p. 4.

¹¹¹ Ibid., II.15, p. 4.

¹¹² Ibid., II.18, p. 5. For details of this campaign see Chapter 3.

Pāvakagiri,” the poet notes.¹¹³ Muḥammad’s son, Maḥamūd also emerges from Gurjara and captures *Dhārāpuri* (Dhara), and is again being praised for his other qualities of generosity and valour and for being the protector of the world.¹¹⁴

Udayarāja’s genealogy of the dynasty of the Gujarati sultans, like Śrīdhara Vyāsa’s account of Raṇmall and Gaṅgādhara’s narratives about Gaṅgadāsa and Māṇḍalīka shows a keen awareness of the region’s history and his contemporary political surroundings. Despite the exaggerated claims about the sultans’ moral and martial powers, which draw from the stock metaphors of the genre, their military achievements locate them firmly within the politics of the region. In the last *sarga* of the poem we find Maḥamūd crossing the Vindhya. The march of the royal army create such confusion that women flee, dropping their anklets and leaving behind their waistbands. Though it is not quite clear who the enemy is, this too appears to be a reference to a campaign that can be corroborated with other sources, that is the march towards the Deccan in order to aid Nizam Shāh Bahmani against Maḥmūd Khaljī of Malwa (c. 1460).¹¹⁵

However, significantly, the genealogy also links the dynasty to divine origins, thus establishing firm links with a Kshatriya past. In this regard, the sphere of the Sultan’s influence is certainly not restricted to the politics of Gujarat and Malwa in Udayarāja’s imagination. In his position as *cakravartin* we find him at the centre of a far more universal geography, involving rulers from all the directions of the subcontinent. The kings of these different countries stand in

¹¹³ The poet uses the word *pratāp* to denote the king’s brilliance. Since the word can also mean courage or valour and heat or warmth, it fits in with the idea of burning of Pavagadh or by implication conquering it.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., II.20 and II.21-27.

¹¹⁵ Sikandar, MS, pp. 50-51.

ceremony and appear, one after the other before the Sultan in the *sarga* entitled “universal leisure” (*sarvāvasara*). Each one wishes to outshine the other in the curiosities and presents that they bring forth in his honour. The court of *gurjarapātsāha* (the Pādshāh of Gurjara) is the foremost among them all, and the virtues of their own kingdoms are easily outshone by this great king’s domain.

Thus the king of Vaṅga, the land where the Gaṅgā becomes “thousand faced,”¹¹⁶ offers (*samarpita*) him jewels from the eastern sea.¹¹⁷ Similarly,

the Pāṇḍya king, who bows down before the great lord [*īśvara* or in this case the Sultan] in respect, offers strings of pearls, resembling a piece of the moon in the oyster shells from which they are gathered.¹¹⁸

The lord of Aṅga, who humbly offers a hundred women dressed in vivid outfits and ornaments, follows this king from the south.¹¹⁹ The lord of Ratnapura brings forth diamonds, while the “slow-moving Kaliṅganāth” brings the gift of elephants.¹²⁰ Sprightly mercenary soldiers from Triliṅga then perform a warlike dance. After this passionate display of arms, in order to protect his life the Malavamaṇḍaleśa (king of the Malawa country) places everything he has (*sarvasva*) at the Sultan’s feet.¹²¹ Thereafter,

that even greater king Kumbhakarṇa¹²² ... He too serves Mahamūdanṛpa, offering [him] vast quantities of gold in tribute.¹²³

The invincible lord of the Kāmarūpa country bows down before his prowess.¹²⁴

¹¹⁶ This could be a reference to the upper reaches of the Hoogli, known as Bhagirathi, which is considered the source of the Ganges.

¹¹⁷ RVMK, IV.2, p. 9.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., IV.3.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., IV.4.

¹²⁰ Ibid., IV. 5, 6.

¹²¹ Ibid., IV.11, p. 10.

¹²² This may be a reference to *rāṇā* Kumbha of Mewara.

¹²³ RVMK, IV.12, p. 10.

After experiencing this regal pleasure-grove, the Māgadhendra [king of Magadha] does not return to nor desires [his own] royal abode. He does not praise [his own] harbour nor is he desirous of the joys of residing in Puṣpapurī [city of flowers].¹²⁵

From that country where the rivers Gaṅgā and Yamunā meet, the lord of Prayāga brings water in numerous, shining, golden pots (*śātakumbhakumbhaihi*).¹²⁶ The king of Mathura (*mathurādhinātha*) permanently subordinates himself by acting as his doorkeeper (*pratihāraha*) and spreading the fame of Maḥmūd, the lord of the earth (*kṣtipāla*).¹²⁷ The jewel of the śakas, the king of Delhi gives up his pride,¹²⁸ while the king of Nepal bows down before him.¹²⁹

In addition to this, as he is

valorous like Indra, Varuṇa ... the likeness of Viṣṇu (*purāri*) and Kṛṣṇa (*murāri*), thus indeed the ruler of Kashmir (*kāśmīramaṇḍalapati*) sings the illustrious king Mahamūda's (*sāhimahamūdanṛpa*) praises.¹³⁰

Himself brave in war ... proficient in archery, he appoints the ruler of Sindh (*sindhupati*) to look after his cavalry, [made up] of varieties of horses.¹³¹

The scene at the court where these numerous powerful kings from well know regions offer various forms of wealth is reminiscent of the one at Gaṅgādāsa's court where the messengers from the different direction report the political news from these to the king. However, in the Sultan's case, it is not merely visiting

¹²⁴ Ibid., IV.13.

¹²⁵ Ibid., IV.14.

¹²⁶ Ibid., IV.15.

¹²⁷ Ibid., IV.17.

¹²⁸ Ibid., IV.18.

¹²⁹ Ibid., IV.19.

¹³⁰ Ibid., IV.20.

¹³¹ Ibid., IV.21.

messengers but the rulers of these lands that come to pay their tribute. The wealth they bring, be it, women, jewels, or elephants, is real, and represents the Sultan's superiority above them all. Further, this scene is not quite complete with the display of wealth. It continues, as do other parts of the narrative, with the spectacle of poetry, music, and dance. Thus in court of this 'Lord of the Earth' there is an abundance of poets; the singers experiment with different tunes in his praise, the wrestlers display their art for the amusement of the audience; and dances are performed by beautiful maidens.¹³²

In Udāyarāja's imagination of his protagonist we witness an interaction between his position as a regional king and as a Kshatriya *cakravartin*, whose influence extends across the subcontinent. At the same time, the trope of the kings from the different regions submitting to his power by presenting him with a variety of gifts contributes to reinforcing his position as a regional monarch and a king who is indeed the ruler of the *Gurjaramaṇḍala*. The final conquest of the lands across the Vindhya and the return to his own capital after spreading destruction through the victorious war firmly locate him as an important regional king who can extend his power to the neighbouring areas and reinforces the genealogy's descriptions of his ancestor's achievements within the region.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have discussed the representation of the Islamic king, Sultan Māhamūd Begaḍā in a Sanskrit work composed in the classical *kāvya* genre. As in the *GPVN* and the *MNC*, Udayarāja, the composer of the *Rājavinoda*, projects his protagonist as an ideal Kshatriya monarch. He is a fierce warrior and a benevolent

¹³² Ibid., IV.25-31, p. 11.

king and the poet draws extensively on the stock imaginary available in the *kāvya* genre in order to enhance this projection. Yet, the Sultan is not merely a local king. He is the ruler of the entire region of Gujarat, and, at the same time, morally, militarily, and monetarily superior to other real and imaginary kingdoms of the subcontinent, including Delhi. Consequently, unlike the narratives discussed in the preceding chapters, the *Rājavinoda* does not engage with local and regional elements of rule but only draws on the universally recognised ideals of a Kshatriya king. The *Rājavinoda* provides us with yet another example of a regional Sanskrit text from Gujarat, a region where a variety of other linguistic choices were available to the rulers and other elites. In the courtly milieu of the sultans, a text such as the *Rājavinoda* would have served the function of reinforcing Maḥmūd's position *vis-à-vis* his local competitors, that is, the chieftains who were also familiar with such literary texts. In addition to this, it would also have contributed to the projection of his image as an independent regional king with access to a variety of cultural resources, including Sanskrit, which remained a language of power in the fifteenth century.

Chapter 5

Medieval Kingship in Alexander Forbes's *Rās Mālā*

In the forgoing chapters, I have discussed different aspects of medieval polity in Gujarat, with a specific focus on the fifteenth century. This period, as I have noted, roughly coincides with the reign of the regional sultans and thus marks the beginning of a number of social, and political, changes in the region. As historians like S.C. Misra and Samira Sheikh have demonstrated, this period also marks the beginning of Gujarat's emergence as a distinct geographical and cultural entity.

So far, the discussions have concentrated around specific texts from the courts of the chieftains of Gujarat and how they imagined their patrons and their political power. The tale of Raṇmall reflected on the chieftains' understanding of the early encounters with the Delhi Sultanate's governor of Anhilvada Patan, while the narratives from the Cauhāṇ and Cuḍāsamā courts demonstrated the way in which the regional chieftains chose to reconfigure their identities through the use of Sanskrit during reign of the regional sultanate. The Sanskrit biography or *caritra* of Maḥmūd Begaḍā, the most influential of the regional sultans, demonstrated the different tropes of 'Hindu' kingship in the Udayarāja's depiction of his Muslim patron and how these may have played a part in reinforcing his superiority and dominance over the region.

In this final chapter, the focus of the dissertation shifts to another important text closely associated with the chieftains and rulers of Gujarat. This is the *Rās Mālā: or the Hindoo Annals of the Province of Goozerat in Western India*, first published in 1856 and written by Alexander Kinloch Forbes (1821-1865), who worked as an officer of the East India Company in Ahmedabad and other parts of

Gujarat in the mid-nineteenth century. Set within the context of the early colonial encounter in Gujarat, where traditional notions of sovereignty, hierarchy, kingship, and the legitimate rights to rule over the numerous kingdoms of the region, were being rapidly reconfigured, the *Rās Mālā* is a reconstruction of the history of the region, focusing principally on the chieftains, who Forbes often refers to as 'Râjpoots.'

The *Rās Mālā* was originally published in London and has seen several reprints since. It is divided into two volumes and four books or sections, and consists of over eight hundred pages including coloured illustrations and architectural drawing of Hindu and Islamic monuments from different parts of Gujarat by the author. The text itself is based on a variety of sources including Jain and Persian accounts, colonial writings, but most significantly, the oral narratives of the *bhāṭṣ* and *cāraṇs*, the traditional genealogist poets who had been an integral part of the princely houses of Gujarat. Forbes was assisted in his endeavours by a Śrīmālī Brahmin poet named Dalpatram Dahyabhai (1821-1898), who became the chief interlocutor between the traditional poets and the colonial officer.

I shift my focus to this nineteenth century text for three principal reasons. First, Forbes's *Rās Mālā* was the first English-language text to have extensively use the oral 'bardic' sources associated with the chieftains of Gujarat in an attempt to reconstruct their past. Forbes often uses the generic term 'bardic authority' to describe the oral narratives of the *bhāṭṣ* and the *cāraṇs* in his text. The works of these poets thus form an important parallel tradition to the written Sanskrit works described in the earlier chapters. As Forbes's main temporal focus in his text is on the Caulukyās and Gujarat under the regional sultans, these represent a significant alternative perspective to the one presented in the foregoing

discussions. Further, the *Rās Mālā*, with its basis in the non-Sanskritic sources, was one of the few volumes covering a vast temporal expanse of the region's history, before the publication of the regional Gazetteers in the second half of the nineteenth century. In his introduction to the 1878 edition of the book, Major J.W. Watson, the then Resident of Rajkot, noted, "There are but few other books of reference about Goozerat, and none of them so encyclopaedic a character."¹ The *Rās Mālā* remains an important source for Gujarati history and several Gujarati writers and historians have viewed it as an '*itihāśgranth*' (history book) as well as '*itihāś sāmagrī*' (historical raw materials) for the study of region's medieval past.²

The second justification for the shift lies in Forbes's understanding of the chieftains as forming the basis of Gujarat's political landscape. Rather than focusing on dominant rulers like the Mughals, Marathas, or even the important dynasty of the regional sultans, Forbes foregrounds the role of the political structures and relations defined by these numerous chieftain who held much smaller patrimonies and lands, but were a significant influence on the politics of the region. For Forbes, these were the men who went on to make up the 'native' states of Gujarat, Kathiawar, and Kutch.

The third justification lies, somewhat more explicitly than the other two, in the general analytical framework of the dissertation, namely, the exploration of the relationship between texts and political power. In that, I view Forbes, like the poets of the previous chapters, as an individual serving the needs of a certain political and social order. The project of collecting materials on the history and

¹ J.W. Watson, introduction to A.K. Forbes, *Rās Mālā or Hindoo Annals of the Province of Goozerāt in Western India* (London: Richardson Brothers, 1878), p. ix.

² Sarvar Sherry Chand and Rita Kothari, "Undisciplined History: The Case of *Ras Mala*," *Rethinking History* 7, 1 (2003), pp. 72-73.

culture of the Indian people by British officials was not a new one. Forbes appears to have been familiar with James Forbes and Mountstuart Elphinstone's (1779-1859) writings as well as with Grant Duff's work on the Marathas and John Malcolm's work on central India. Similarly, James Tod's momentous work on the Rajputs, entitled *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* (1832), was already well known at the time that Forbes came to India. With his training at the Company's Haileybury College in England, and the influence of the grand old men of the British administration in India weighing upon him, Forbes set out on a mission to understand, and thus arguably to control, indigenous society in its own terms. His journey was undoubtedly fuelled by personal curiosity, but it also served a colonial purpose, taking him into the realm of indigenous knowledge institutions and to the politics of the native states. In this sense then, Forbes's text also allows us to think about another way in which a 'literary' text can serve the ideological needs of a polity.

In the present chapter, I read and explicate Forbes's *Rās Mālā* with the aim of analysing its understanding of Gujarat's medieval past. The chapter is divided into three main parts. In the first part, I briefly discuss nineteenth-century Gujarat and the context in which the *Rās Mālā* was produced. I also discuss the career of its author, Alexander Forbes. In the second part, I focus on the text, its texture, and the different elements that went into its making, in order to demonstrate how Forbes's ideas about the politics and society of medieval Gujarat were a product of multiple authorial interventions. In the final section, I analyse the specific themes related to the polity of the chieftains of Gujarat as Forbes discusses them. Here, I focus on Forbes's notions of political geography and how he imagines Gujarat, as well as on the idea of the 'Rājpoos' and their polity, thus drawing comparisons

with the discussions on similar themes in the previous chapters of the dissertation.

GUJARAT IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Before it was gradually taken over by the British from the early years of the nineteenth century, Gujarat was not one united region but a cluster of autonomous and independent kingdoms ruled by rajas, nawabs, and princes. Different parts of the region had made up the Sultanate dominions and the Mughal province, often including parts of modern day Malwa, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan within its boundaries. The administrative and legal systems implemented by the dynasty of regional sultans in the fifteenth century were modified somewhat but were continued by the Mughal emperors. Following the death of the Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb, in 1707, however, Maratha raids to different parts of Gujarat and Kathiawar caused much unrest among the local Rajput, Bhil, and Koli chieftains and led to a considerable disruption of trade. Yet, the region's trade and trading institutions appear to have remained intact during this period and cities like Ahmedabad, Cambay, and Surat continued to flourish.³

The British took over the administration of Ahmedabad and other parts of Gujarat from the Marathas in 1808 and incorporated them into the wider area of the Bombay Presidency. This led to the introduction of a new climate of peace for the promotion of trade, a fact that was greatly appreciated by the merchant

³ See, for instance, Neera Desai, *Social Change in Gujarat* (Bombay: Vora and Co, 1978); Makrand Mehta, *The Ahmedabad Cotton Textile Industry: Genesis and Growth* (Ahmedabad: New Order Book Co, 1982).

classes, who were quick to adapt to the ways of the new government.⁴ In Ahmedabad, and, other major cities of Gujarat, there generally emerged an attitude of cooperation between the British and the indigenous merchants, both of whom understood the value in increasing profits.

Further, in these big cities the impact of the British government was primarily manifested in a new climate for enterprise and the gradual emergence of a new social class consisting of western-educated government officials, lawyers, teachers, and small traders.⁵ Several men from traditionally wealthy families also became involved in the running of the government and thus, promoted and benefited from the social and economic processes that had been set in motion by the British.⁶

In an attempt to draw the region into the wider colonial orbit, a number of company officers began to facilitate the modernisation of the region through the introduction of machinery in industry and westernised educational institutions and societies and similar other activities. George Fulljames, who had come to India in 1828 as a geologist, for instance, became one of the foremost British officials to encourage the modernisation of different parts of Gujarat through his geological investigations as well as by setting up schools, tramways, and dams, as well as introducing measures to ensure the safety of the various internal trade routes.⁷ Officers in other urban areas of the region like Surat and Bharuch also initiated similar changes.

⁴ Mehta, *Ahmedabad*, Svati Joshi, "Dalpatram and the Nature of Literary Shifts in Nineteenth Century Ahmedabad," in Stuart Blackburn and Vasudha Dalmia, eds. *India's Literary History. Essays on the Nineteenth Century* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), pp. 327-357.

⁵ Mehta, *Ahmedabad*, p. 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 12-14.

While the British annexed some parts of Gujarat, particularly the trading centres like Ahmedabad, Surat, and Bharuch, the kingdoms of most of the indigenous chieftains were not brought under their direct control. Like the Sultans, Mughals, and Marathas before them, the British brought the kingdoms of the plains under their control with ease but found it difficult to do the same with those that lay in areas of difficult topography like the salt flats of Kutch or the jungle uplands of Rewa Kantha and Kathiawar.⁸ Their remoteness from the heartland of imperial power made the setting up of administration hazardous and costly. The fragmented and fissiparous thrust of the politics in these regions posed further difficulties in establishing direct control.⁹ The British thus organised and grouped these 'native states' into various agencies and according to their size and power they were supervised on behalf of the East India Company's government by Residents or Political Agents.

This pattern of political administration led to a two-tiered administration system in the region, where in one part of Gujarat a fragmented political system was replaced by a uniform administration connected to the Bombay Presidency and the wider colonial imperial network and in other parts, constituted by the native states where, while the British engagement was active, the integration into the wider all-India colonial network was only gradual.¹⁰ This led to a number of differences in the manner in which the two kinds of areas developed economically and in terms of their society and politics.

⁸ Ian Copland, *The British Raj*, p. 2.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

¹⁰ Desai, *Social Change*, p. 96.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the British government struggled to control the Maratha incursions into these states, curb the internal warfare between them, as well as establish lasting revenue relations, as had been the case with their predecessors in the region. This constituted a period in which the British were expanding their territorial and administrative control over the different parts of Gujarat. Questions of sovereignty were therefore on the forefront of the British attention who were competing with the Marathas and the chieftains for the region's political and economic resources.

ALEXANDER FORBES (1821-1865)

Forbes belonged to a family of Scottish descent, but was born and raised in London. He became an apprentice at a London-based firm of architects in the late 1830s but was soon nominated to the Civil Service of the East India Company in 1840. After training at the Company's Haileybury College, he travelled to India in the winter of 1843, where he was appointed Assistant Collector of Ahmednagar in the Bombay Presidency. This was the beginning of Forbes's long career in western India. Today, Forbes is remembered more for his literary and cultural engagement in the region than for his administrative acumen, for from the outset he encouraged the development of literary societies, newspapers, and schools.

Forbes's attitude to governance was deeply influenced by the European Romanticism of early British administrators in India such as Thomas Munro (1761-1827), John Malcolm (1769-1833), and Mountstuart Elphinstone (1779-1859). Their philosophical sensibilities led to a personalised, benevolent, and paternalistic style

of rule.¹¹ Good governance was to be nurtured by developing sympathetic understandings of India and its people. Further, as administrators, they were sensitive to history as an organic expression of a society's character and thus were anxious to conserve India's enduring institutions, as they saw them. Men like Malcolm, for example, endeavoured to rehabilitate, and reclaim for the Company, what they conceived of as an Indian tradition of personal government.¹² They believed in a style of governance that was committed to a sympathetic understanding of India and its people through the development of an intimate knowledge of the country. Elphinstone, for instance, wrote a two-volume work on Indian history with extensive borrowings from the work of the early philologist 'orientalists' but based the authority of his scholarship on his own extensive perusal of historical documents and his own personal experience of being in India. He was convinced that India could not be understood merely through its texts and grammars,¹³ nor separated from its people. Such ideas are visible in Forbes's personal practices, the institutions he established and nourished, and are expressed explicitly, as we shall see, in the design and intention of the *Rās Mālā*.

Manasukhram Suryarama Tripathi's observations in his memoir of Forbes reflect his inclination towards this paternalistic style of governance. Tripathi, who was the honorary secretary of the Gujarati Sabha at the time of the Forbes's death,

¹¹ Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 24-26.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹³ Nicholas B. Dirks, "Colonial Histories and Native Informants: Biography of an Archive", in Carol Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), p. 281.

notes how when he travelled all over the region he preferred to go on foot.¹⁴ On these journeys Forbes would always carry a map, a bag of money, a pistol, and a stick. On the way, as he met different people he would speak to them as though he was an ordinary man rather than an important officer of the Company. This way, writes Tripathi, Forbes would learn all the news of the land, habits, practices, people's joys, sorrows, and superstitions as well as help anyone who appeared to be in distress or difficulty.

In a later memoir of Forbes, in the 1924 reprint of the text, H.G. Rawlinson, notes that Forbes was aware of the shortcomings of the native princes' and chieftains' policies of governance. Yet, he was critical of the Company government's attempts to impose control over the native kingdoms by interfering in matters of succession and other matters.¹⁵ He believed instead that reform and improvement in these kingdoms would have to come from without, not "in a policy of wholesale annexation, but in establishing a civil service with tact, sympathy, and knowledge of the people, to be able to guide the administration of the native states along proper lines."¹⁶ According to Forbes, it was men like the

¹⁴ Manasukharam Suryarama Tripathi, *Fārbas jīvan caritra* (Bombay: Fārbas Gujarāti Sabhā, 1869), p. 17. This memoir was written in order to accompany the Gujarati translation of the *Rās Mālā*, published in the same year.

¹⁵ H.G. Rawlinson, "Alexander Kinloch Forbes. A memoir," in A.K. Forbes, *Rās Mālā: Hindoo Annals of the Province of Goozerat in Western India*. Edited with Historical Notes and Appendices by H.G. Rawlinson (Delhi: Low Price Publication, 1997 [1924]), p. xi. Unless otherwise specified, I use this edition of the text throughout the chapter. It is noteworthy that after its publication in 1856, the *Rās Mālā* was reprinted with an introduction by J.W. Watson and a memoir of the author by A.K. Nairne. See A. K. Forbes, *Ras Mala: Hindoo Annals of the Province of Goozerat in Western India, New Edition with an Introduction by Major J.W. Watson and a Memoir of the Author by A.K. Nairne*. London: Richardson Brothers. In 1924, it saw another reprint, this time with a memoir by H.G. Rawlinson. The 1997 edition that I have used is the reprint of the 1924 publication.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

colonial Magistrate, the Political Officer, or the Civil or Criminal Judge, who could work towards the improvement of these states but what they needed most was,

*Experience, experience involving a practical knowledge of land tenures, of reciprocal relations of the chiefs, and their subjects and tenants, of history, connexions, usages and precedents of any family, in addition to the general usages of all families of rank. These are the peculiar qualifications of a Political Officer; in addition to which he needs the qualifications of every Mohfussil functionary – accessibility, temper, patience, firmness, and a love for the work given him to do for its own sake.*¹⁷

These lines are clearly reflective not only of the way in which Forbes envisioned his role as an officer of the Company but also of how he perceived his project of collecting, collating, and writing the history of the region for the aid of his colleagues and successors.

Forbes's activities in creating and encouraging the nascent institutions of civil society, such as literary societies, newspapers, and schools, in the parts of Gujarat in which he served, also illuminate his personal interest in the region, in addition to his philosophy of governance. In 1848, while serving as a Judge and Sessions Judge in Ahmedabad, for instance, Forbes was instrumental, along with Fulljames, and others, in establishing the Gujarat Vernacular Society for the promotion of the Gujarati language. Forbes had first been introduced to Indian languages and literature, particularly through Sir William Jones's work on Sanskrit, while studying at Haileybury. In India, he passed examinations in Hindi and Marathi and later, when posted in Ahmedabad, he also began learning Gujarati, initially from a certain Rao Bahadur Bhogilal Pranvallabhdas and then from Dalpatram, whom he met in 1848.

¹⁷ Rawlinson citing Forbes in *ibid*, pp. xi-xii. Author's emphasis.

In 1850, Forbes was appointed as Assistant Judge and Sessions Judge in Surat. As in Ahmedabad, here too he initiated and became involved in a number of civic activities. He started a weekly newspaper called *Surat Samachar* and helped to set up a library. At the behest of the Bombay government, he also took on the post of the 'city improvement officer,' during which he worked towards creating awareness about various civic matters among the people of Surat.¹⁸ In 1851, Forbes returned to Ahmedabad as the First Assistant Collector and in 1852 he was appointed Political Agent at Mahikantha. In the following year, he became the Assistant Judge and Sessions Judge at Ahmedabad. In 1854, Forbes returned to England where he completed the *Rās Mālā*.

Back in India in 1856, Forbes was sent to Surat as Acting Judge and later in the same capacity at Khandesh. In 1859, however, his expertise on the region were acknowledged by Lord Elphinstone, the then Governor of Bombay Presidency, who appointed him the Political Agent of Kathiawar, with the particular aim of subjugating some "recalcitrant chieftains" and the piratical "rebel" Vaghers of Okhamandal.

In the preface to the *Rās Mālā*, Forbes notes that it was not long after he had moved to Gujarat that he came across certain documents that bore the characteristic signatures of 'two bards' which were indicative of an economic system that he had never encountered before.¹⁹ These aroused his curiosity and he sought more information about these men and their dialect, which would, he

¹⁸ Tripathi, *Fārbaś*, pp. 11-12.

¹⁹ Forbes, *Rās Mālā*, p. xx.

believed, be the “means of unlocking the casket in which the treasure was contained.”²⁰

His need to get around the administrative difficulty of understanding this indigenous economic and social system and the interest in history and literature that had developed during his training at Haileybury led him to seek the aid of local elites and scholars. More significantly, the bardic documents that Forbes was interested in were, as has been noted, directly connected with the different ruling clans scattered all over the region and with whom the British were interacting at the time as part of their policy of territorial expansion.

Thus, right from the start of his appointment in Ahmedabad, Forbes, with Dalpatram’s help, became involved in collecting every kind of manuscript related to Gujarat’s history. He sought out old texts from the Jain *bhaṇḍārs* (traditional libraries) and courts from all over the region. He also made a concerted effort to interact with the traditional poets and recorded their narratives. In his choice of collection methods, Forbes appears to have specifically preferred the use of indigenous customs and manners, which often led to the *bhāṭṭ*s and *cāraṇ*s as well as his contemporary Gujarati writers to visualise him as the new patron of poets, or a Bhojā incarnate.²¹

For instance, in 1852, during the month of the Dasera festival, Forbes organised a *kavi melo* or gathering of poets at the court of Maharaja Jasvantisimha of Idar. In the royal courts of Gujarat there had existed a long tradition of such

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ The Paramara chieftain, Bhoja, who ruled over Dhārā (central India) in the twelfth century was well known as a poet and polymath. His patronage of learning and poetry, particularly the aestheticised courtly *kāvya*, have become the subjects of legends all over north and north-western India right from the time of his rule.

gatherings during the auspicious days of Dasehra or other festive occasions such as wedding ceremonies. In the nineteenth century, when Forbes worked in Gujarat, however, a number of these princely houses had lost their fortunes and were unable to afford the large-scale patronage to their traditional poets and genealogists as their ancestors had once done. The Rāthods of Idar were one such royal family who had once been famous for granting half the villages of their kingdom for the benefit of the poets and for patronising a variety of poetic talents. It was for this reason that Forbes considered Idar to be the appropriate place to convene a gathering of poets. He got Maharaja Jasvantisimha to write invitation letters to the poets in the surrounding areas. Each poet was asked to present the kind of poetry that was his particular speciality. Following this, Forbes would ask him related questions about history and traditions of the region. He then honoured each poet with a gift, as was appropriate, emphasising his own humble status as a 'mere patron,' as was the practice in the royal courts of yore.

This gathering of poets is not described in detail by Forbes himself, but by his contemporary Gujarati writers like Dalpatram and Manasukharam Tripathi, and later by Kavi Nanalal, Dalpatram's son. Based on this event, Dalpatram wrote the *Kavitvilās* (*The Pleasure of Poetry*) in the year 1867. Sometimes also referred to as *Fārbasvilās* (*The Pleasure of Forbes*), this is a partly fictional work in Gujarati describing Forbes's interaction with the different classes of poets. In the preface to the work, Dalpatram briefly speaks of the history of these traditional poetic gatherings at royal courts but in the text itself he replaces the royal patron with Forbes. Throughout the *Kavitvilās* Forbes is thus projected as performing the same role that a traditional king or prince may have done in the past. One of the poets in the text enters the court reciting the following verse,

The creeper of heroic poetry, would have been lost from Gujarat;
By sprinkling it with pure waters, Fārbas (Forbes), you have caused it
to flourish and spread.²²

At another point in the narrative, yet another poet rushes into the gathering, loudly addressing Forbes as *bāp* or father, a term of address used for the Rajput kings. He notes,

Oh father, where were you hiding until now? Our books are infested
with white ants, others we had to sell to feed ourselves, our children
have taken to other professions.²³

Apart from listening to these laments, the king-like Forbes of the *Kavitvilās* asks the poets questions about their families, the nature of their work, their views on philosophy and morality as well as on technology, asking them to recite verses on these topics including one on clocks and another on the railways. Forbes is thus represented as a traditional patron with a modern progressive bent.

Tripathi also projects Forbes and his arrival in Gujarat in similar terms. He describes Gujarat as the land of prosperity and virtue, “the milch cow of *Bhārat varśa* (India),” “the orchard of the Lord’s play,” which had gradually been laid waste due to the attacks of the Marathas.²⁴ The orchard-like Gujarat needed someone who would be able to direct the sowing of its seeds and it was then that gardener-like Forbes arrived.²⁵ He also describes several incidents which indicate that Forbes’s methods of collecting historical material led to the poets viewing him as the saviour of their art and as their new patron. He narrates one instance

²² Dalpatram Dahyabhai, *Kavitvilās* (Ahmedabad: Gujarat Vernacular Society, 1867), p. 29.

²³ Ibid., p. 53.

²⁴ Tripathi, *Fārbas*, p. 4.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 5-6.

when, while he was on a visit to Panchasar, Forbes was accosted by an old *bhāt* named Hirji, who had heard of the *sāheb*'s fame. Hirji presented Forbes with an old book and informed him that when one of his fellow poets had once presented such a book to the Gaekwad, he had been granted a village. "The Englishman is a big king, so I have more hope from him," the bard asserted.²⁶ Forbes was able to ward off the poet by narrating an anecdote explaining that if he had truly been a king he would have had no need to be in the *naukari* (service) of the Company.²⁷ However, this incident, which is briefly mentioned by Forbes as well,²⁸ presents a picture of Gujarat as region whose past glory had been completely lost before Forbes arrived to restore it.

Although Forbes was largely silent about his own personal investment in the formation of literary and learned institutions, his own efforts, as well as those more obviously associated with broader colonial aims, have had a lasting impact on Gujarat's cultural landscape. The way Forbes has been understood in Gujarat as an indigenous patron with a modernising bent reflects his own Romantic ideas of paternalistic governance and desire to preserve indigenous institutions. These articulations also demonstrate how the Indians were able to turn Forbes's project of representing them into an exercise through which, in fact, they were able to represent him in a more familiar indigenous idiom.

After serving in Gujarat for a few more years, Forbes was appointed judge at the *Sadar Adalat* (High Court) at Bombay in 1862. In Bombay, Forbes continued to be involved in various activities related to the promotion and preservation of

²⁶ Ibid., 7.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Forbes, *Rās Mālā* p. xxi

Gujarat's history and culture. In 1864, he was offered the presidency of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society but refused to accept the position, and chose to be its vice-president instead. In the same year, he was appointed vice-chancellor of the Bombay University. In Bombay, as in Ahmedabad, he received the support of the city's elites for his zeal for establishing societies and newspapers promoting the Gujarati language. Thus, a number of prominent citizens of Bombay interested in Gujarat, approached him to help set up the Gujarati Sabha for the promotion of the Gujarati language. The Sabha, which was later renamed the Fārbas (Forbes) Sabha was established in March 1865 with Forbes as its President. Soon after this, Forbes suffered from a brief illness and died in Puna in the August on the same year.

The *Rās Mālā* was a product of the context described above and the brainchild of Alexander Forbes, a colonial officer. Yet, a careful reading reveals a multi-layered text that was based on a wide variety of sources and that was a product of numerous interventions, primarily including his chief assistant, Dalpatram, and the bards. This involvement, I suggest, shaped the manner in which the *Rās Mālā* represented the chieftains of Gujarat and their precolonial political structures.

At least two strands of argument exist in recent scholarship about the production of knowledge under the colonial regime in the nineteenth century. While scholars like Bernard Cohn,²⁹ Ronald Inden,³⁰ Nicholas Dirks,³¹ and others

²⁹ Bernard S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987) and *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

³⁰ See for instance, Ronald Inden, "Orientalist Constructions of India," *MAS*, 20, 3 (1986): 401-46 and *Imagining India* (London: Hurst and Company, 2000 [1990]).

have argued that the colonial rule introduced entirely new forms of knowledge in India which were imposed on colonial society and facilitated the colonial agenda of conquest. On the other hand, scholars C.A. Bayly,³² Eugene Irschick,³³ Thomas Trautmann,³⁴ Norbert Peabody,³⁵ and Phillip Wagoner³⁶ have suggested that the colonised were not merely passive receivers of these new forms of knowledge but often collaborated in their formation through their own expertise in indigenous knowledge systems. This collaboration led to the continuation of a number of indigenous forms of knowledge in the colonial period and often played an important role in the way colonial knowledge was systematised and codified.³⁷ In thinking about the *Rās Mālā*, I find this second line of argument particularly persuasive, and, in this section, I reflect on the manner in which the making of the text was the product of an interactive process in which the indigenous mediators played a unique and active part.

³¹ Nicholas B. Dirks "Colonial Histories and Native Informants: Biography of an Archive," in Carol Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, eds, *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press), pp. 279-313. Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003 [2001]).

³² C.A. Bayly, "Knowing the Country: Empire and Information in India," *MAS*, 27, 1 (1993): 3-43 and *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

³³ Eugene Irschick, *Dialogue and History: Constructing South India, 1795-1895* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994).

³⁴ Thomas Trautmann, "Inventing the History of South India," in Daud Ali, ed. *Invoking the Past: The Uses of History in South Asia* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999) pp. 36-54.

³⁵ Norbert Peabody, "Cents, Sense, Census: Human Inventories in Late Precolonial and Early Colonial India," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 43, 4 (2001): 819-50.

³⁶ Phillip B. Wagoner, "Precolonial Intellectuals and the Production of Colonial Knowledge," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 45, 4 (2003): 783-814.

³⁷ For a more detailed exposition of the two stands of arguments see Wagoner, "Precolonial Intellectuals," pp. 783-786. See also Sreenivasan, *The Many Lives*, pp. 119-120.

Philip Wagoner, for instance, examines in detail, the role of the Niyogi Brahmins in the making of the Colin Mackenzie's survey and collection project.³⁸ Focusing on the work of one Niyogi Brahmin named Narrain Row in the collection of the historical epigraphy of the Deccan, Wagoner demonstrates how the community's experience as salaried employees of the pre-colonial Arcot Court and their expertise in graphology, gave them tremendous potential for the development of an epigraphic methodology. He also cites a number of testimonies of the Niyogis used in disputes in which they were called in to identify handwritings and exercise their expertise in customary lexical and syntactic forms. Such testimonies, notes Wagoner, implied that these men had "built up a mental catalogue of typical phrases and expressions occurring in the formal language of a given historical context."³⁹ More significantly, these implied that they could employ this knowledge to pass judgment on the chronological age and authenticity of a given document, skills that were of great use in the interpretation of the numerous epigraphs that were to be found scattered around the south Indian (and Indian in general) countryside. Thus, Mackenzie's collaborators, Narrain Row and several others, according to Wagoner's study, played a vital and pioneering role "in the process of plotting premodern polities along the dual axes of time and space, recognizing that the expansion and contraction of territories could be measured through epigraphic means."⁴⁰ Thus, following Thomas Trautmann's work on the history of the Dravidian language family, Wagoner shows how two different mental frames, the colonial and the

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 783-811. For the involvement of another set of Brahmins, the Cavelly brothers, in the Mackenzie collection see Nicholas B. Dirks, "Colonial Histories."

³⁹ Wagoner, "Precolonial Intellectuals," p. 802.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 804.

India, came together as the British scholar administrators got learned Brahmins and other pandits to teach them the vernacular languages employed in the peninsula. "Although the British undeniably held the upper hand in this relationship and set the agenda for the conversation, the colonial knowledge thus produced would not have taken the form it did, had it not been for the fact that the Indian intellectuals provided not merely raw data, but a key analytic framework that led to the formulation of the new forms of knowledge."⁴¹

Drawing on Wagoner's argument, I demonstrate how Forbes's use of the Brahmin poet Dalpatram's expertise in the bardic dialects and *braj bhāṣā* and the narratives preserved by the *cāraṇs* and *bhāṭs* contributed to the making of Forbes's ideas on Gujarat's medieval regional polity. I begin, however, with a brief description of the contents and texture of the *Rās Mālā*.

THE RĀS MĀLĀ

The *Rās Mālā* begins with a description of what Forbes considers to be Gujarat's natural boundaries and in the first section, tells the story of the early medieval (eighth to thirteenth centuries) dynasties of Patan and Kathiawar. The second book is an account of the 'Mohumeddan' period in Gujarat, but focuses mainly on the chieftains and their political relations with the regional Sultans during the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries. In the third book, Forbes writes of the Marathas in Gujarat and brings his narrative up to the beginning of the British rule in India (eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries). Even though the second and third books are framed by the dominant rulers of those periods, namely, the 'Mohumeddans' and the 'Mahrattas' respectively, Forbes is primarily concerned

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 786.

with the 'Rajpoots' or warrior chieftains who, he believed, formed the substratum of the political landscape of the region during this time. Thus, in both these books, he focuses on the chieftains' relations with the two categories of dominant rulers and eventually on their involvement with the British. Finally, in the fourth book entitled 'Conclusions,' Forbes's focus shifts to a mixture of topics including the different Hindu castes of Gujarat, Rajput land tenures under the Mohumeddans, Marathas, and the British as well as festivals and other social rites and rituals that were current among Hindus in the region at the time.

The focus on the chieftains renders the rule of the Sultans, the Mughals, and the Marathas, marginal to Forbes's imagination of Gujarat's history. Forbes almost entirely ignores Mughal rule over Gujarat but expresses his admiration for the regional Sultans. The Marathas, however, are treated with utmost disdain. He regards them as 'vulgar,' 'wily,' and 'mercenary' at various points in the book. This attitude is shaped perhaps by Forbes's own experience of the turbulent relations between the British and the Marathas, his genuine affection for the subjects of his study, the chieftains, and the view that the British were the most benevolent of the rulers to have controlled the region in the face of its current political condition.⁴²

Thus, the *Rās Mālā* covers a long-temporal range, but focuses most specifically on the chieftains, their kingdoms, and their political relations. As other colonial writers, Forbes also views the arrival of the British as the region's panacea. The historical account in the text ends in 1838, with the settlement and

⁴² Rawlinson, *Memoir*, p. xvii, also see Sherry Chand and Kothari, "Undisciplined History," p. 76.

control of the district of Mahikantha (Myhee Kântâ), when “the British influence became paramount throughout Goozerat.”⁴³

SOURCES OF THE *RĀS MĀLĀ*

The sources of the *Rās Mālā* are varied, though it is the contents and the tone of ‘bardic’ legends that dominates the narrative. The first book, combines Jain texts such as Hemacandra’s (twelfth century) *Dwayāśraya* and Merutuṅga’s (fourteenth century) *Prabandhacintāmaṇi* (The wishing stone of chronicles),⁴⁴ Brahmin poet, Kṛṣṇājī’s poem dedicated to the Caulukya rulers, entitled the *Ratan Mālā* (*Garland of Jewels*) and the work of the bardic poet Cand Bardāi, who wrote the biography of the Cauhāṇ king, Pṛthvīrāja. In the second book, Forbes relies more on the accounts of the Islamic histories like the *Tārīkh-i-Ferishta* and the *Mirāt-i-Aḥmadī* to discuss the specific details of the regional Sultans but bases the account more substantially on the bardic narratives. Similarly, in the third book, which is also the last of the historical sections of the *Rās Mālā*, Forbes’s account relies on these oral narratives about the chieftains but uses Alexander Grant Duff’s *History of the Mahrattas* (1826) and James Forbes’s *Oriental Memoirs* (1813–1815) to describe the history of the Marathas. While the Rajputs remain the focus of his narrative in this section, the British involvement in Gujarat is clearly seen as beneficial both for the native princes as well as the Marathas. The writings of James Tod and Mountstuart Elphinstone also form a substantial part of the *Rās Mālā*’s footnotes.

Forbes is cautious about the ‘factual’ value of the indigenous sources he uses. He writes, “the present work is wholly popular, and advances no claims to

⁴³ Forbes, *Rās Mālā*, vol. 2, p. 218.

⁴⁴ See Chapter 1, for more on these texts.

scientific value.”⁴⁵ For instance, he sees the Hindu traditions as “destitute of historical foundation”⁴⁶ and warns against the exaggerations that are integral to bardic tales. The Jain accounts, he says, are more concerned with “ecclesiastical transactions” than “civil affairs” but, in both cases, “they rather content themselves with anecdotes than attempt a connected relation.”⁴⁷ He is, however, a somewhat more convinced of their validity as recorders of ‘facts’ than their Hindu counterparts.⁴⁸ He is also critical of the “Mohammedan historians” who for most part describe the Hindu chieftains “only under the title of infidels, insurgents or rebels” even though it is clear, according to him that neither the sultans nor the Mughals were ever able to effect their complete subjugation.⁴⁹

Yet, even though there may have been exaggerations, as was also the case with the mediaeval kingdoms of Europe, he notes, “there is often in the bardic sketches much of spirit, and of effective, however rude, colour and drawing.”⁵⁰ He further cites the author of a book entitled *The Lives of the Queens of England* (1844) to justify their accuracy. Thus for Forbes, the bardic accounts that he collected were similar to those found in England and in Europe. He writes, “where they are written, and *are intelligible without oral explanation* (author’s emphasis), may rank with the contemporaneous ballad poetry of other nations; where unwritten, they approximate to common oral tradition.”⁵¹

⁴⁵ Forbes, *Rās Mālā*, xxii.

⁴⁶ Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 228-229.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 229.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 276.

⁵⁰ Forbes, *Rās Mālā*, vol. 2, p. 265.

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 265-266.

In the preface to the book, Forbes specifies his perceptions of the uses to which his work may be put. He writes, "... it may ... be of use to the local officer, and may interest some few even of my countrymen at home, in the fortunes of their fellow subjects – the Hindoos in Goozerat."⁵² Later, in the 1878 edition J.W. Watson, then the political agent of Rajkot, reiterated the book's continuing use for the purposes of the administration.⁵³ The *Rās Mālā* was thus clearly composed for an English readership and was generously interspersed with references to European mythology and folk legends, as well as parallels drawn from Shakespeare's plays. Thus, for instance, the circumstance of the founder of Anhilvada Patan, Wun Raj's birth are compared with the birth of king Edward's son in Shakespeare's *King Henry IV*.⁵⁴ Similarly, the legend of Siddharāja's use of *bhoots* (spirits) to construct a water tank is compared to the practice in France of attributing "everything possessing any extraordinary character ... by the credulity of the former generations, either to the fairies, the devil, Caesar."⁵⁵ These parallels seem to give the *Rās Mālā* a universal and familiar quality for the English or European reader.⁵⁶

However, the bulk of the *Rās Mālā* is based, as has been noted, on Forbes's collection and interpretation of the bardic legends. As Forbes's assistant, one of Dalpatram's main tasks was to facilitate his understanding of these oral traditions of *bhāṭs* and *cāraṇs*. Dalpatram gave Forbes ready access to this otherwise closed and secretive world. Dalpatram was also able to provide skilled and erudite

⁵² Forbes, *Rās Mālā*, p. xxii .

⁵³ Watson, Introduction, p. ix.

⁵⁴ Forbes, *Rās Mālā*, vol. 1, p. 33.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 159.

⁵⁶ See also Sherry Chand and Kothari, "Undisciplined history."

translations and exegesis of the poetic historical epics of the *bhāṭṣ* and *cāraṇs*. It is worth dwelling for a moment on the world the bards inhabited and the services they performed in order to show how and why Dalpatram became so indispensable for Forbes.

The bards were an integral part of the numerous royal houses of Gujarat, Kathiawar, and Kutch and they kept genealogical records and maintained family histories for them. Their position *vis-à-vis* their patrons was a complex one as they performed numerous secular and religious roles. As poets, they composed and chanted verses in their own unique styles and metres. The verses they composed were generally in praise of a renowned warrior from the patron's putative ancestors, in commemoration of a victory, or in praise of a present chieftain. Historically, they were known for accompanying the armies of their patrons in battle and were responsible for inspiring the soldiers to fight by loudly chanting poems about the commanding chieftain and his lineage.⁵⁷ The two main castes of *bhāṭṣ* and *cāraṇs* were further sub-divided in smaller groups, some of which kept written records of the genealogies and poems while others committed them to memory.⁵⁸ Their function as genealogists also served to maintain their patrons' links with a prestigious mythological or historical ancestor and their social positions amongst other Rajput groups. In addition, they commanded great respect among their patrons since they were considered as being directly linked to the goddess and hence their presence was considered sacred and trusted in

⁵⁷ Virbhadrā Singhji, *The Rajputs of Saurashtra* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1994), p. 239.

⁵⁸ See A.M. Shah and R.G. Shroff, "The Vahīvancā Bāroṭs of Gujarat: A caste of genealogists and mythographers," in Milton Singer, ed., *Traditional India: Structure and change* (New Delhi: Rawat publications, 1975), pp. 40-70. This study by Shah and Shroff is a seminal work on these genealogists whose traditions still remain neglected in contemporary scholarship.

mediations related to diplomatic or revenue transactions between the different kingdoms.

Inevitably, the wares of these godly-poets were fiercely protected, as they both legitimised and perpetuated rule in many of the princely states, and served important diplomatic and martial purposes. Dalpatram, through his own personal acquaintance and reputation, allowed Forbes access to this otherwise hidden world. Furthermore, the precise style and politics of the traditional poets of the region would probably not have been comprehensible to Forbes without Dalpatram's guidance. However, the poets of the region were not merely neutral containers of historical wisdom, their presentations, as I have noted, were eulogistic, but also dynastic and directed by the needs of the courtly politics of the time. It was the accounts of such men that became the basis of much of the *Rās Mālā*. Prior to his meeting Forbes in 1848, Dalpatram had been closely associated with this category of court poets. Despite being born to a family of priests, Dalpatram had chosen to follow the Swaminarayan sect and a career in composing poetry in *braj bhāṣā*, the language associated with the *bhāṭs*.⁵⁹ He travelled extensively all over Kathiawar and Kutch, attending poetic *sabhās* or gatherings. In these gatherings, many of which took place in temple precincts and sometimes at royal courts, *bhāṭs* and *cāraṇs* would be encouraged, either by the patron or the audience, to prove their skills over one another. Dalpatram often competed in these sessions and succeeded in proving his poetic abilities against the traditional poets. He gradually became well known in and outside Kathiawar and was honoured by the king of Idar and later by the maharao of Kutch. He was also invited by poetry-loving *seths*, or wealthy merchants, of Ahmedabad to perform at

⁵⁹ The *cāraṇs* used a Pingal, a dialect of Gujarati and Marwari, for their compositions.

gatherings held in their homes.⁶⁰ Yet, despite his popularity among the wealthy elite, the patronage remained intermittent, and he was not able to find a permanent patron to fulfil his ambition of becoming a *rājakavi* (court poet) who could compose in *braj bhāṣā* like the *bhāṭṣ*.

Forbes heard about Dalpatram and his skills in *braj bhāṣā* poetry through Bholanath Sarabhai, a colleague at the court in Ahmedabad. In the winter of 1848, he summoned Dalpatram from his hometown, Wadhwan, to Ahmedabad, in order to assist him in his task of gathering Gujarat's history and poetry. Dalpatram describes the experience in the following words,

After studying the different *kāvya alamkārs*⁶¹
My heart was bound to poetry;
I was looking everywhere for a leader of men,
I was calling out for him in the world of the gods,
In the court of a generous and sincere patron,
I had the desire to find a place,
As these thoughts came to my mind, says Dalpat,
Fārbas's summons arrived just at that opportune moment.
At the gates of Khanpur [Ahmedabad] near the banks of the
river,
I met him at the *cāndā suraj* palace;⁶²
It was the year 1848 of the Christian era,
There was complete affection in the first meeting itself,
It increased five times when he [Forbes] was close and ten times
when he was afar,
The love increased during the pleasant companionship...⁶³

⁶⁰ Nanalal Dalpatram, *Kaveśwar*, vol.1, pp. 174-176

⁶¹ Ornamentation in poetry.

⁶² This was the name of Forbes's bungalow in Ahmedabad. The building was originally built by the Mughal emperor Shah Jehan (1627-1658).

⁶³ Dalpatram Dahyabhai, *Fārbasviraha* (Ahmedabad: Gujarat Vernacular Society, 1898), pp. 2-3. During the period in which they worked together, close bonds of friendship developed between Forbes and Dalpatram. These are reflected in this long poem in Gujarati, which can be translated as '*The Sadness of Separation from Forbes*' that Dalpatram composed after Forbes's death. In this poem, Dalpatram expresses deep sadness for the loss of bygone days shared with Forbes and describes his mentor and friend in eulogistic and even somewhat romantic terms.

Forbes's own account does not mention the encounters between the two men with the same degree of emotion. However, Forbes acknowledges the debt he owes to his Indian collaborator by noting that since they first met his "valuable co-adjutor" had been almost constantly by his side.⁶⁴ Forbes furnished his new assistant with the means to travel all over Gujarat so as to look for chronicles and copy inscriptions. He himself travelled to many parts of the region during his official work and took every opportunity to gather information about its history from local poets and Jain *bhaṇḍārs*. In these travels, Dalpatram acted as his assistant, guide, and interpreter.

The efforts of the two men did not only result in the compilation of the *Rās Mālā* but also led, as has been noted, to the formation of a number of societies and newspapers for the promotion of Gujarati language and of the ideas of reform.⁶⁵ Dalpatram became actively involved in the work of the Gujarat Vernacular Society and from 1855 onwards became its secretary and the editor of its journal. Prior to this he had also been involved in Forbes's reformist and philanthropic activities. Dalpatram continued to be involved in the Society's work after Forbes's death.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Forbes, *Rās Mālā*, p. xxi.

⁶⁵ See also Shirin Mehta and Makrand J. Mehta, "Dalpatrām ane Aleksāndar Forbes: Gatstakani ek Maitrī upar Drṣṭipāt," *FGST* (1968), p. 14.

⁶⁶ Dalpatram went on to become one of the foremost reformist poets writing in Gujarati in the nineteenth century. As has been noted, prior to meeting Forbes and becoming involved in his historical endeavours, he had been well known for his poetry in *braj bhāṣā*, rather than Gujarati. However, his engagement with the welfare of Gujarat and the promotion of the Gujarati language seems to have developed only after his interaction with Forbes and his involvement with the Gujarat Vernacular Society. This is also the time when he began composing poetry in Gujarati. In this regard, Dalpatram appears to have shifted away from his earlier ambition of becoming a court poet in favour of his new, more urbanised, role as an assistant to a colonial officer, preferring to be the latter's guide and interpreter. It is worth reiterating that his interaction with Forbes, the idea that this great colonial officer was leading Gujarat to the restoration of its past glory, and his own role as an agent of this restoration were crucial in Dalpatram's re-articulation of himself as an urban reformist poet serving the cultural and ideological needs of the Ahmedabadi elite, rather

Of more specific significance to the making of the *Rās Mālā* is the fact that Forbes based the fourth book of the text almost entirely on two Gujarati essays by his assistant. This section differs from the rest of the book as it introduces its reader, who he imagined as a young British officer serving in the region, to different aspects of Hindu society in Gujarat. It describes, as has been noted, with the descriptions of the dominant castes, customs, religious and secular practices, and with land tenures. The bulk of this section is based on essays entitled “Demonology and Popular Superstitions in Gujarat” (*Bhoot Nibandh*), and an “Essay on Caste” (*Jñāti Nibandh*); both by Dalpatram and translated by Forbes in 1850. Both these essays were based entirely on the author’s own experiences and native knowledge of the region.⁶⁷ Forbes’s conclusions about the nature of contemporary Gujarati society were thus drawn from this Brahmin poet-scholar’s observations and experiences.

The *Rās Mālā* is thus a something of a bricolage, based on diverse sources and as has been already discussed, a multiplicity of contributors. This multiplicity works to complicate a text that can otherwise be seen as being shaped entirely by a colonial officer’s perceptions of the region and its past. Dalpatram’s own description of the *Rās Mālā* is indicative of the three-tiered interaction between Forbes, himself, and the bards. Interestingly, he chose to write of the English-language book in modern Gujarati in the traditional poetic style:

than a wandering poet seeking his fortunes in the princely houses whose influence and power were on the decline.

⁶⁷ Soon after its establishment in 1848, the Gujarat Vernacular Society announced an essay competition on the topic of spirits and popular superstitions prevalent in Gujarat. Forbes encouraged Dalpatram to send an entry, not so much for the grand prize money of Rupees one hundred and fifty but for the prestige it would bring him if he won. After its translation by Forbes in 1850, the *Bhoot Nibandh* was also translated in to Urdu and Marathi.

The mind perceives the book as a veritable *Madhuvan*,
 The chapters tasteful and beautiful like a mature tree;
 The leaves [pages] auspicious, the sentences are the flowers and fruits
 therein,
 The paintings have indeed become the cowherd maidens;
 The song about the virtues of the royal *kulas*,
 Ordered in the ragas of the cowherds' flutes,
 They appear before Dalpatram as containing the nine *rasas* [emotions],
 The *Rās Mālā* is the very world of *rāsas* [traditional chronicles] in the form
 of a book.⁶⁸

GENRE

Before moving on to a more specific study of the themes related to the medieval polity of Gujarat represented in the text, a brief discussion on the genre of the *Rās Mālā* is appropriate, as, with its multiple sources and styles of narration, it defies any simple categorisation.

Sherry Chand and Kothari analyse the *Rās Mālā* with the aim of locating it within some current debates in historiography in general and the postmodernist questioning of the foundation of truth claims in general.⁶⁹ They also conclude that it does not easily fit into a taxonomy and prefer to call it a “kind of history” or “a species of historical object of a very postmodernist mixed kind.”⁷⁰ They point out that at a time when history was being institutionalised as a ‘scientific’ academic discipline in the imperial metropolis, Forbes, a British administrator in the colony composed the *Rās Mālā* as a “pre-scientific,” “non-professional” chronicle.⁷¹ In this sense, it looks forward towards ‘post-scientific’ late-twentieth century

⁶⁸ Dalpatram Dahyabhai, *Fārbas Viraha*, p. 22.

⁶⁹ Sherry Chand and Kothari, “Undisciplined History,” p. 69.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 82.

⁷¹ Ibid.

historiographical forms including oral history. But it is also narrative and descriptive and makes no attempts to ask the large 'why' questions."⁷²

Further, in its emphasis on the history and manners of a specific region, its openness and respectful attention to local sources and information, its focus on a vernacular tradition rather than on the grand Indian tradition of Sanskrit, it can even be regarded "as a sort of 'history from below,'" written by a colonial administrator.⁷³ These aspects of the text are further qualified and its categorisation made more complex as it was meant as a basis of information about the region and its people for the use of British administration and was also subject to a number of colonial prejudices.

The *Rās Mālā* does not follow a strict dynastic approach to the history of Gujarat, but shifts from stories of individual kings or ambitious warriors to places of interests and to the oral histories of different clans in a fluid manner. The sources set the texture of the narrative, which often shifts back and forth from the formal tones of the author's own writing to the more informal voice of the bard or a Jain narrative, or indeed an occasional quote from an Islamic historian. Legends about Rajput warriors are often interspersed with descriptions of towns and cities within Gujarat in which history, mythology, and Forbes's own observations about the place are vividly woven together. In this regard, the narrative reflects a differential temporality, where different time periods along with their varying mythologies, histories, and territories seem to have seamlessly merged with one another. Interestingly, however, these fluidities and multiplicities contained in the *Rās Mālā* appear to jostle with the aims of colonial power and contributed to

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

various aspects of the colonial knowledge-building processes that were at work in this period.⁷⁴

As a colonial officer who was concerned with revenue settlement and the control, pacification and administration of areas that were not entirely under British influence, Forbes was certainly creating a compendium useful for the future generations of Englishmen who he imagined would serve in Gujarat. He, as his predecessors such as Tod or Mckenzie, understood that his endeavour of gathering and compiling the information about the people of the region was directly linked with the needs of colonial government that was trying to establish its control in different parts of the subcontinent. Forbes's own views are also not devoid of the impulses of his time that sought to present a picture of a homogenous region with social and political institutions that could be compared against those at home. However, a close reading of the text also reveals the tensions that exist between Forbes's pre-colonial sources and his own attempts to unite, classify, and familiarise. In the following sections, I focus on aspects of the *Rās Mālā* specific to the medieval period and highlighting the manner in which the pre-colonial literary material that Forbes used worked to mitigate the colonial administrator's views of the region's history and society.

⁷⁴ For the politics of the colonial involvement in collecting empirical data about India, see David Ludden, "Orientalist Empiricism: Transformations of Colonial Knowledge," in Breckenridge and van der Veer, *Orientalism*, pp. 250-278;

FORBES AND THE IDEA OF GUJARAT

Even though the kingdoms and territories he wrote about were included in the Bombay Presidency at the time, Forbes saw Gujarat as a distinct region with a distinct identity. According to him, it was made up of two portions, namely, the continental portion or Gujarat proper, and the peninsular projection into the Arabian Sea. The range of hills connecting the Vindhya formed its eastern boundaries, while the Aravalli ranges to the north separated it from Malwa, Mewar, and Marwar. Kutch and its Rann formed the north-western and western boundaries, while the Gulf of Cambay constituted its southern tip.⁷⁵

Significantly, however, while Forbes set out the boundaries in such clear terms, an analysis of his actual account of the history of Rajputs gives a far more fluid picture of the political and cultural composition of the region. Forbes's 'Rajpoot' warriors and kings originate, move, and settle in Malwa, Sindh, and Rajasthan. In the third book, the one on British relations with the Rajputs and Marathas, Gujarat continues to appear as a cluster of small independent states rather than a homogenous region.

In the story of Hâloojee, the chief of the Jutts from Sindh, for instance (as in those of Jug Dev and the Vāghelā brothers, explored, in the following sections), we see the different levels of movement and migration that are reflected in the bardic accounts. Briefly, the tale is as follows. The beautiful daughter of Hâloojee, the chief of the Jutts who lived in Sindh was coveted by its 'padishah.' Consequently, the chieftain and his clansmen looked to the Paramāras, who held the territory of Moolee in Kathiawar, for protection. Unable to protect the Jutts without the aid of a proper fortress, the leader of the Paramāras sought the aid of

⁷⁵ Forbes, *Rās Mālā*, vol. 1, p. 3.

what Forbes calls the “King of Goozerat,” who, at the time, was Sultan Maḥmūd Begaḍā. The sultan’s armies arrived from Ahmedabad and the ruler of Sindh was successfully defeated. Hâloojee, who was now homeless, converted to Islam and was offered lands by the sultan within his kingdom but the former asked for the wasted lands of Ranpur instead and established himself there.⁷⁶

This story, like several others described in the *Rās Mālā*, demonstrates how Forbes’s own sources reveal the idea of a world of heterogeneous kingdoms and multiple migrations, rather than one unified region. Even in the first section of the *Rās Mālā*, Forbes equates ‘Goozerat’ with ‘Unhilwârâ (Anhilvada)’ and its surrounding areas, rather than with the boundaries he describes at the beginning of the work. Forbes’s idea of the region appears then to be led by his own colonial cartographic impulses to unite and categorise it in recognisable terms. His sources, however, in this regard as in other aspects, reveal a somewhat different story.

RĀS MĀLĀ AND GUJARAT’S MEDIEVAL PAST

The temporal contours of the *Rās Mālā* are framed within the period between what Forbes calls ‘ancient India’ (although we are not told when exactly this begins) and the arrival of the British in Gujarat. This period, in Forbes’s view, was “more practically connected to present Hindoostan” than the previous one.⁷⁷ Thus, in the preface he specifies the scope of the book in the following words,

It is to the story of the city of Wun Raj (Anhilvada Patan), and of the Hindoo principalities and chieftainships which sprang up amidst its ruins, and which have many of them, continued in existence to the

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 347.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. ix

present day, that the reader's attention is in the present work invited.⁷⁸

He finds further justification for this choice of subject in the fact that any

stranger who is for any length of time resident in the land of the Hindoos, can hardly fail to notice many customs and usages of that people which are evidently relics of society not long gone ... The very remains of the Moslem power themselves are most strongly impressed by the character of the race whose rule was supplanted by that of the crescent ...⁷⁹

Thus, in his study of this 'middle' period Forbes finds a continuity of social and political traditions that are of utmost significance for his interpretation of the history of the region. Forbes, however, does not have an explicit term for the period that lies between the 'ancient' and 'modern.' He does, however, draw extensively, though intermittently, on terminology from the feudal formations of medieval Europe to describe land and military relations in the region under scrutiny. What then is the nature of this period for Forbes? How does he imagine its constituent elements?

The "story of the city of Wun Râj" or Anhilvada Patan is viewed by Forbes as the most glorious part of the region's pre-British history. While he is sceptical of the exaggerations by its chroniclers, he himself sees the reign of the city's various dynasties, namely the Cāvḍās, Caulukyas, and the Vāghelās, as a time of prosperity and grandeur which were coveted by Muslim invaders like 'Mohumed Ghoree' and later 'Allh-ood-din Khylyjy.' His understanding of the role of these dynasties in the history of the region is clearly reflected in his suggestion that at the time when the "Chowrâ dynasty, under Wun Râj, first established itself at

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Unhilwârâ, the country of Goozerat was destitute of any other inhabitants than the wild aboriginal tribes.”⁸⁰ However, in the reign of the last of the Caulukya or Solanki princes, he continues, “we behold the same tract of country united under one strong government, studded with wealthy townships, adorned with populous cities, fenced with strong fortresses.”⁸¹ Thus, Forbes clearly sees these rulers as the founders of all that is to be admired in the region’s past. The stability and prosperity that was brought by the rulers of Anhilvada was never to be found in the dynasties that followed. Forbes writes:

never was she [Gujarat] for one hour not unwounded by domestic strife, from that day on which the sceptre was struck from the hand of Bheem Dev II, to the long distant period when Rajpoot, Moslem, and Mahratta at length agreed to sheathe their swords, and repose for the just arbitrement of their quarrels on the power, the wisdom, and the faith of the sea-dwelling stranger.⁸²

‘Alā’ al-Dīn’s raids to the Patan and Somanatha mark the final blow the glory of Wan Rāj’s great city. Forbes is certainly disapproving of the “Moslem sword, then wielded by the furious hands of Allah-ood-deen, whose patronymic Khylyj is familiar to every peasant of Goozerat, under the substituted form ‘Khoonee,’ or ‘the murderer.’”⁸³ Yet, even though he expresses his disapproval of this Sultan and his lieutenants, his views about the period that followed betray a sense of ambiguity. The arrival of the Delhi Sultans to the city of Anhilvada exhibits, according to him, a sense of anarchy. Yet the chieftains that maintained their independence, and form the subject of his study, are also an object of admiration. Forbes repeatedly mentions the fact that despite every attempt by ‘Alā’ al-Dīn and

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 248.

⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 248-249.

⁸² Ibid., p. 249.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 226.

his successors, the regional Sultans, the Mughals, and the hated Marathas, these chieftains managed to continue as independent rulers of their territories. This picture was very different from the one presented in the Persian and Arabic histories which depicted the chieftains as recalcitrant men who constantly caused trouble in the sultanate domains.

Despite his disapproval of the 'Moslem sword,' Forbes is not critical of the dynasty of the regional sultans whose rule follows the period of disorganisation. He compares Aḥmed Shah, to Wan Rāj as the "founder of a new and brilliant dynasty" and Maḥmūd Begaḍā to Siddharājā Jayasīṃha.⁸⁴ His account of many of their exploits is based directly on the *Mirāt-i-Aḥmadī*, but the dominating voice in these chapters is also that of the 'bardic authority' and their tales of the chieftains. In these accounts too, the influence of the sultans' rule is visible. As the impact of their rule spread over the region, these may have been incorporated into the oral narratives of *bhāṭs* and *cāraṇs*, as is demonstrated in the story of the Vāghelā brothers in the following section.

The period of sultanate rule then is dominated, for Forbes, by the movements of different 'clans' and chieftains trying to establish or maintain their control over agricultural lands, clusters of villages, or, like the Gohils of Peerum (Kathiawar) over parts of the sea. It is this aspect of Gujarat's pre-British history that dominates Forbes's understanding of it and which, according to him continues until the settlements of 'native' chiefs of these lands by the British.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 249.

THE RĀS MĀLĀ AND THE NOTION OF MEDIEVAL KINGSHIP

Forbes's account of the pre-colonial history of Gujarat, like the text itself, appears to be a patchwork of different ideas merged with the colonial writer's own observations and prejudices. Here, I explore the notions of kingship that are reflected in the *Rās Mālā*, for it is the *rājās* and chieftains of the region that make up Forbes's primary interest and the subject of this dissertation.

As a colonial writer of the pre-1857 era, Forbes was perhaps not as explicitly concerned with the question of sovereignty as his successors and does not engage in an elaborate discussion on this question or on the nature of kingship.⁸⁵ Despite the precedence given to the 'Hindoo' chieftains in his account of Gujarat's history and society, he also says little about the origins of the group as a whole in the *Rās Mālā*. Unlike James Tod, whose work he uses extensively in the *Rās Mālā*, Forbes does not explicitly mention a common origin theory or myth in relation to these men. He often uses the categories 'Rajpoot' and 'Kshutrees' (Kshatriyas) interchangeable and does not make their meaning explicit. The two terms are not clearly demarcated and refer throughout the book to any non-Muslim chieftain or men of arms, without differentiating them by their origins or descent. The Caulukya kings, whose chronicles and inscriptions make no mention of the term Rajput, are thus seamlessly equated with several lineages like the Gohils, Parmars, or Kathis of the later period, who were itinerant pastoralist groups that subsequently came to settle in the region.

On the basis of the collection of Jain chronicles, the *Ratan Mālā*, and some inscriptional records, Forbes engages in his narrative with the position of the king

⁸⁵ Inden, *Imagining India*, p. 176.

or 'sovereign' in the days of Anhilvada's glory. The 'sovereign,' according to Forbes, is undoubtedly the most prominent figure in these records, "supported by the white-robed priests of the Jain religion, or the Brahmanical wearers of the badge of regeneration."⁸⁶ He imagines the 'sovereign' as the centre of a "warlike circle," in which, after him and his priests, "stand the warriors of Rajpoot race in ringed tunics" and the "Wâneea (mercantile class), Muntreshwurs (*mantrés*wars or minister), already in professions puritans of peace, but not enough drained of their fiery Kshutree blood."⁸⁷ These are followed by the "half-warrior" minstrels, and bards and then the "peaceful cultivators," followed by the "wild aborigines of the ravine and of the hill."⁸⁸ Forbes had little else to say about the nature of the sovereign and his kingdom and also does not engage in a discussion on the court and administrative hierarchies of the later "Rajpoot" chieftains of the region.

The term 'Rajpoot' in fact appears to have multiple meanings in the text. The tale of 'Jug Dev Purmâr,' who leaves his maternal home in order to seek his fortunes in a foreign land, for instance, represents a typical picture of 'Rajpoot life,' for Forbes, and, is an example of the multiple meanings the term holds. This story occupies a comparatively long chapter in Book I of the *Rās Mālā*. It is also based on a 'bardic' account, rather than the written Jain texts or the *Ratan Mālā* that Forbes uses in this section of his narrative. The tale, very briefly, is as follows. Jug Dev, the son of king Oodayaditya's unfavoured wife, leaves his mother's home in order to seek his fortunes in a foreign land after he is insulted on several occasions by the favourite queen. "I will get service somewhere," he reassures his

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 230.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 230-231.

mother, a woman of the Solanki lineage.⁸⁹ After killing a couple of tigers who had become a menace to travellers and cows and acquiring a retinue of loyal “Rajpoots”, horses, and elephants, Jug Dev eventually acquires lands and a second wife in return for offering his loyal service to Siddharaja, the King of Patan.⁹⁰ Jug Dev is thus a fearless, chivalrous and loyal warrior embodying all the qualities of a “Rajpoot” and his story is often told by the bards to inspire their patrons. The Rajputs, defined in Forbes’s narrative by such bardic accounts, are men of arms who moved around the region in search of land and patronage and were ever ready to lay down their lives in battle.

The story of Jug Dev shows how Forbes chose to represent the idea of the ideal Rajpoot as presented in the bardic accounts. In this tale, the word ‘Rajpoot’ first refers to Jug Dev himself as a warrior. Second, it refers his father, Oodayāditya, the Paramāra king of Dhara. Third, it is also used for the men who go on to constitute his retinue which he acquires *en route* to the Solanki kingdom. Finally, the category also seems suggest that ‘Rajpoots’ were men of arms, who moved around the region in search of land, patronage, or simply to escape a natural or political contingency, and were ever ready to lay down their lives in battle. The transfer of resources in terms of money, elephants, horses, women, and men point to the nature of the kind of fortunes that were in store for these men. Thus Forbes chooses to highlight personal prowess rather than genealogical links with a prestigious lineage or courtly paraphernalia to define the Rajpoots in his text.

⁸⁹ The king’s favourite wife belonged to the Vāghelā lineage which is also associated with Gujarat.

⁹⁰ Forbes, *Rās Mālā*, vol. 1, pp. 117-149.

Forbes also does not explain the basis of the delineation of the different clans and their individual characteristics in the *Rās Mālā*. Similarly the status of mixed groups such as the “Gohil Koolis” whose ancestry was the intermarriage between a Gohil Rajput and Bheel woman are not clearly explained.⁹¹ Yet there is an implicit assumption in his writings that the Hindu chieftains of Gujarat were closely linked with the Caulukyas, many branches of them descending directly from them or having loyally served them, “never reverted to their *natural relations* to the paramount power which they bore during the sway of the dynasty of Unhilwârâ.”⁹² Like many other writers of his time, Forbes also does not clearly articulate the difference between terms like clan, tribe, or race,⁹³ all of which he uses to describe different groups or families of chieftains, thus leaving the actual nature of their social structure somewhat ambiguous to the reader.

One reason for Forbes’s unclear articulation of the origin and nature of the chieftains as a social group perhaps lies in their diverse histories and spheres of influence. Although he does not write about the origins of most of them, his account gives the reader a sense of the movements and migrations that characterised the sociology of many of these men. After the fall of Anhilvada Patan at the hands of Sultan Alauddin Khalji, for instance, different branches of the Vāghelās, according to Forbes’s bardic accounts, seem to have established themselves in different parts of the region, including Gondwana in central India.⁹⁴ Similarly, he records that a branch of the “Purmâr race” and “Shodhâ tribe”,

⁹¹ Forbes, *Rās Mālā*, vol. 1 (1924, 1997), p. 346.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 275–276. Emphasis mine.

⁹³ Susan Bayly, “Caste and ‘Race’ in the Colonial Ethnography of India,” in Peter Robb, ed. *The Concept of Race in South Asia* (New Delhi: 2006 [1995]), p. 175.

⁹⁴ Forbes, *Rās Mālā*, vol. 1, p. 275 and p. 281.

consisting of some two thousand people, entered Gujarat from Sindh on account of a famine in their original homeland of Parkar.⁹⁵ They established themselves at Muli (Kathiawar) and were later joined by the Jutts. The Jutts were also from Sindh, and migrated to Gujarat for the fear of the Padshah who coveted their leader's daughter.⁹⁶

An important and related feature of 'Rajpoot-hood' and political relations between the Sultans and the chieftains during Sultanate dominion, according to Forbes's narrative, was the institution of outlawry or *Bâhirwutoo*.⁹⁷ The bardic accounts that Forbes uses in his descriptions of this period speak of outlawry as the mode of protest adopted by the chieftains who had lost their lands to the Sultans as a means to exert pressure and have them returned. Being well-acquainted with the countryside, these men would seek asylum outside the village settlements in forested tracts and engage in plunder and pillaging activities. The somewhat complex story of the brothers, Wurhojee and Jetojee, who belonged to the Wāghelā lineage that had ruled over Anhilvada Patan prior to the entry of the Delhi Sultans into the region, is one example of how the outlaws or *bahārwaṭiyās* functioned according to Forbes's bards.⁹⁸ When Aḥmad Shah (the founder of Ahmedabad) took over their lands, these two brothers moved their families to a couple of nearby villages and functioned as outlaws plundering and ravaging the areas around Ahmedabad with their bands of horsemen. All of Sultan Aḥmad's attempts to apprehend them failed. However, with no reliable means of

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 282-283.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 347.

⁹⁷ Modern Gujarati: *Bahārwaṭu*. The word is derived from the combination of the words *bahār* or outside and *waṭ* or path.

⁹⁸ For all the details of the tale see Forbes, *Rās Mālā*, vol. 1, pp. 316-323.

subsistence at hand, the two brothers gradually began to lose their followers. One night, while on an expedition, one of their men passed by a group of 'Rajpoots' near a tank led by a certain Bhundaree Ūkho. The peasant who drove this Ūkho's cart, perceiving this, said, "Sir! I think the outlaws are come to the tank; we had better move on quickly."⁹⁹ Ūkho replied, "Fear them not, there is no Rajpoot among them like me, or they would have recovered their grās within three days."¹⁰⁰ On hearing this, the brothers decided to take this man up on the challenge and took him along on a raid to Ahmedabad.

Here, as it was a Friday, the Sultan's begum or queen and the other ladies of the palace were being escorted to a holy tomb near Sarkhej, on the outskirts of Ahmedabad. At the tomb, the escorts remained at a short distance while the ladies proceeded alone to pay their respects to the saint. Seeing this as an opportunity, Ūkho said to the brothers, "Unless you seize these ladies, you will not recover your lands."¹⁰¹ Thus the horsemen surrounded the women. On being asked by the queen who they were; they said they were Wurho and Jeto who, having lost their hereditary estates, were determined to die and therefore attack the queen's retinue. Realising that such an act would result in her losing her honour and hence her life, the queen promised the men that she would procure the recovery of their lands immediately. Then, forbidding her escorts from attacking them, she proceeded to Ahmedabad and sat "moodily in the palace, forbidding the lights to be lit."¹⁰² The Sultan being apprised of the situation came to her and asked her what had happened. She told him what had occurred earlier and said, "I have

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 317.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.,

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 318.

given my oath, therefore, you must send for the two brothers, and reinstate them in their lands. If they had driven off my carriage, where would have been the Sultans (Padshah)'s honour?"¹⁰³ The Sultan then invited the brothers, who had been waiting on the outskirts of the city, and promised them robes of honour. They were given five hundred villages, which they equally divided between themselves. In turn, they gave the Sultan their sister in marriage. The brother were thus incorporated into the Sultanate polity, though according to another bardic story that follows in the text, were despised by other Hindu chieftains. Forbes's account of Sultanate Gujarat mentions several other instances of outlawry caused by the Sultans' attempts claim the chieftains' lands or honour.

In contrast to the image of courageous and enterprising bands of warriors, in the fourth book, Forbes has surprisingly little to say about the present condition of his protagonists. This account projects the heroes of the first two books as leading an "indolent and monotonous life" in times of peace.¹⁰⁴ The Rajputs' primary engagement seems to be sleeping, eating, entertainment, and drug taking. Forbes notes how after his afternoon siesta, "which lasts until about three in the afternoon", the Rajput chieftain "prepares for the great business of the day, the distribution of the red cup, kusoomba or opium."¹⁰⁵

As discussions in the first part of this dissertation have shown, the contemporary historiography of the men who are categorised as 'Rajputs' has been fraught with debate. Historians like B.D. Chattopadhyaya, Norman Ziegler, Dirk Kolff, Sumit Guha, Ramya Sreenivansan, and several others have analysed the

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., vol, 2, p. 261.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

specificities of their origins and demonstrated the regional and temporal variations in the making of the social and political group called the 'Rajput.' A detailed study of the *Rās Mālā*, one of the few English language texts that gives precedence to oral narratives, reveals the different meanings that the category of 'Rajput' contained and the illuminated the processes that may have gone into its making.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have demonstrated the manner in which the *Rās Mālā*, used various pre-colonial sources, particularly, the oral narratives of the *bhāṭs* and *cāraṇs* to reconstruct the history of the chieftains of Gujarat. In this, Forbes belongs to the category of colonialists, like Elphinstone, who regarded materials other than classical Sanskrit works as the true key to understanding the India that they sought to control. This aspect of the *Rās Mālā* links it directly with the politics of colonial territorial expansion and power. The involvement of Dalpatram and the *bhāṭs* and *cāraṇs* also encompasses and implicates them into this orbit of colonial power.

However, the process that went into the making of this multi-dimensional text suggests that despite the colonial administrators' concern with gathering information about the region's chieftains, the extensive use of precolonial source materials created tensions within the account. These tensions between the desires, explicit or implicit, of the colonial officer to know and therefore control the region with more efficiency and the fluidity displayed by his sources, are specifically reflected in Forbes's ideas about the region's past as well as the institution of kingship.

Forbes's narrative, as the foregoing discussion reveals, is a work based not only on a range of disparate sources but also various, sometimes discordant and selectively used authorial voices. Yet, as with other works of the period, the *Rās Mālā* claims to present an authoritative history and was accepted as being so even after further epigraphically and archaeological research was conducted towards the end of the nineteenth century. As the responses of the Gujarati literati to Forbes and his endeavours reveal, the *Rās Mālā* was given an entirely different meaning in their imagination. The *Rās Mālā* then is not simply a product of a colonial certainty, tinged with romanticism and administrative ambition; rather, the garland of chronicles is a well-threaded series of cultural influences, styles, and modes of presentation.

Conclusion

This dissertation has explored representations of kingship in fifteenth-century Gujarat through a close reading of a variety of literary narratives. These narratives included Old Gujarati and Sanskrit works from the local kingdoms of the region, as well as an epic poem in Sanskrit patronised by one of the most influential sultans of the time, Maḥmūd Begaḍā. In addition to these texts, the dissertation also analysed representations of kingship in fifteenth-century Gujarat through the work of the colonial officer Alexander Forbes. As I have shown, Forbes collected a vast number of legends about the local chieftains that were in circulation during his years in service to compose the *Rās Mālā*, which was an account of the region's history and society, primarily during the medieval period. The study of these narratives illuminated the different ways in which the poets and authors projected ideals of kingship and sovereignty on to their protagonists. In conclusion, I would like to recapitulate some of the key strands that run throughout this dissertation.

An important methodological issue I have addressed in the foregoing pages is the use of literary texts to understand the cultural and ideological aspects of a pre-colonial society. These texts, as I have emphasised, are best understood not as 'factual histories', but as the products of specific social and political agendas. These agendas, I have argued, need to be located within their particular historical contexts. This approach allows for the possibility of drawing out the ideologies that may have constituted the texts and that may have, in turn, been constituted by them.¹

¹ In this approach, as noted in the introduction, I am particularly influenced by the writings of Gabrielle Spiegel and Dominick LaCapra.

In the past two decades, scholars have begun to extensively recognise the value of literary materials that were, until recently, considered unfit for the study of pre-colonial South Asia. Notable among the studies that base their understanding of the social and cultural processes in pre-colonial India on literary sources, is the collaborative work done by the three authors, V.N. Rao, David Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanayam. These scholars have used a variety of courtly narratives, Persian histories and European accounts to reflect on the political, cultural, and historiographical traditions of medieval South India. Further, Sheldon Pollock's important insights on the relationship between literary texts and political power have led to a number of scholarly debates on the issue, and also to specific regional studies exploring, modifying, or contesting his ideas.

Despite this growing methodological interest in literary materials, however, there has been very little scholarly work on the important region of Gujarat. This dissertation has sought to redress this lacuna. The literary materials used here, including the *Rās Mālā*, have hitherto not been fully utilised for the study of historical processes in the region. While several surveys of Gujarati literature mention the *Raṇmallchanda* (along with the *Kānhaḍade Prabandha*) as the only examples of secular literature in the regional language produced during the medieval or 'Muslim' period, the Sanskrit works find virtually no mention in these lists.² Similarly, the *Rās Mālā* is considered a 'source' for the study of the Rajputs of Gujarat, but its projection of these groups has never been analysed in the light of its own colonial political context. In this dissertation, I have brought all these

² For example, see Krishnalal M. Jhaveri, *Milestones in Gujarati Literature* (New Delhi, Madras: Asian educational Services, 1993 [1914]); Munshi, *Gujarāta and its Literature*; Joshi et al. *Gujarati Sāhityano Itihās*.

different literary materials together in order to understand some of the ideological elements that made up fifteenth-century Gujarat.

By analysing narratives in Old Gujarati and Sanskrit, as well Forbes's use of the *cāraṇi* sources, I have also highlighted one aspect of the variegated language tradition of medieval Gujarat. The modern form of Gujarati that is spoken in the region today was only one of the many languages that were once used in the region. The use of this language in the modern state was, in fact, encouraged by colonial officers like Forbes from the nineteenth century onwards. The present study, however, shows that the region had multiple linguistic traditions, which interacted closely with one another. In this regard, my study has shown that, in the second millennium, Sanskrit did not lose its position as a language of power but was in fact reconfigured in new ways to suit the needs of the emerging regional elite. The differences in the way it was used by the chieftains and the Sultan are indicative of the literati's willingness and ability to modify classical literary devices to suit new patrons, regardless of their religious affiliations. Similarly, the study has also shown that in the geographically restricted regional polities (or vernacular polities as Pollock terms them), the transition to the vernaculars was neither simple nor complete. Further research on the use of the languages under survey, as well as Persian, Gujarati, Braj, and the regional dialects such as Kathiawari, Kutchi, and Sindhi, would certainly enhance our understanding of this linguistically diverse region.

The central issue that has framed this dissertation is the relationship between literary texts and their contexts. The narratives from the local chieftains' courts, though different from one another in language, texture and genre, reflect their protagonists' anxieties and struggles over their sovereignty and authority

during the social, economic, and political flux of the period. With the decline of the Caulukya-Vāghelā dynasties, groups such as the Rāṭhoḍ of Idar, the Cauhāṇs of Champaner, and the Cuḍāsamās of Junagadh, were gradually able to consolidate their hold over the territories they had acquired by grant or force. The appearance in the region of ambitious Delhi governors like Zafar Khān and the subsequent establishment of the Gujarat sultanate, however, led to shifts in a political scenario that was already precariously balanced.

These transitions, I suggest, are reflected in the manner in which the narratives represented their protagonists and their political worlds. In the story of the Idar chieftain Raṇmall Rāṭhod, his panegyrist Śrīdhara Vyāsa's inclusion of multiple literary and cultural elements produced a narrative that gave an animated sense of the warrior ethos that was emerging among chieftains at the time (Chapter 2). This ethos integrated both the classical elements of Kshatriya-hood as well as the more open-ended identity of the 'Rajput' that different categories of fighting men could now aspire to. As an embodiment of this ethos, Raṇmall, the ruler of a small hill kingdom, was able to challenge the powerful sultanate armies and retain his sovereignty over his territories in the poet's imagination.

While the Sanskrit narratives about Gaṅgādāsa and Māṇḍalika are composed in the courtly *kāvya* style and therefore draw on the classical norms of Kshatriya-hood, they were also set firmly within the regional context of fifteenth-century Gujarat (Chapter 3). The notions of kingship represented in these works speak of their protagonists in the universalised terms of *kāvya* poetry, including elements from epic and Puranic mythology. Yet the poet Gaṅgādhara's engagement with the specificities of the region's politics and geography make

these narratives regional epics which would have reinforced their patrons' moral and martial positions within and around their own little local kingdoms. However, in the case of Raṇmall, as well as the other two chieftains, the need to maintain a firm hold over their territories and social status through the promotion of martial values in politically uncertain times, is apparent.

In the Sanskrit biography of Muḥammad Begaḍā it is possible to see yet another aspect of the literary representation of regional kingship. Maḥmūd, as I have demonstrated (Chapter 4), aspired to a region-wide recognition of his authority. Apart from his successful attempts at subduing the local chieftains and gaining control over their resources, he was also an important player in the wider politics of the subcontinent in which the regional rulers now competed with one another for supremacy. As any successful Kshatriya king of the past, then, he too aspired to benefit from the power and prestige of Sanskrit. Unlike the narratives about the local chieftains, Maḥmūd's biography does not focus on specific details of the region's history and politics, but instead locates its protagonist as a *cakravartin*, a paramount king and a Kshatriya, who has descended from none other than the great epic warrior, Rāma. The universal values of kingship available in the cosmopolitan Sanskrit language and the *kāvya* genre were thus harnessed to suit the Muslim sultan's political needs.

A similar interplay between texts and their contexts is seen in Forbes's *Rās Mālā* as well. In the early nineteenth century, the East India Company was expanding its domains and was faced with the task of negotiating its position in relation to the Marathas and the numerous local chieftains. As an officer of the Company, Forbes was closely involved in this process. The Rajput kingdoms of Gujarat and Saurashtra had had a long history of struggles with the raiding armies

of the Maratha chieftains from the seventeenth century onwards. The chieftains therefore shared a common enemy with the British. Forbes's account of the region clearly reflects his sympathy for these men and also the need to establish the 'Râjpoot' chieftains as the legitimate rulers of the region, surpassed only by the British.

However, Forbes's understanding of the warrior ethos of the medieval period was also shaped by his chief informants, the *bhāṭs* and *cāraṇs*, as well as the Brahmin poet, Dalpatram, who became the colonial officer's principal assistant and translator. A study of the manner in which the *Rās Mālā* was constructed also demonstrates how colonial perceptions of India were so often moulded by the active involvement of Indian intermediaries.

The political and social context of the narratives discussed in the foregoing pages also shaped the idea of 'kingship' that each of their authors chose to project. Thus, in the context of medieval Gujarat, it is possible to discern multiple perceptions of kingship. The military resources of the Delhi Sultans as well as their regional successors were far greater than those of the local chieftains. While, as the Persian accounts of the period suggest, these men were able to negotiate terms with the imperial authorities due to the strategic locations of their territories, none of them could make claims over the entire region and the status of 'Gurajara-lord.' Despite the lofty claims of their protagonists' prowess in battle against the *yavana* kings, then, the authors of these narratives do not assign correspondingly majestic titles to them. Similarly, their territorial claims also remain restricted to their own 'little kingdom'. The Sultan, on the other hand, is adorned with the titles that were traditionally reserved for independent kings, the resonances whose power could be felt beyond his own kingdom. The trope of the rulers of different

kingdoms of Bhāratavarṣa paying Maḥmūd their respects in Udayarāja's narrative further reinforces his claims to a pan-regional status.

Another important element encompassed in the idea of the king in the medieval narratives of the chieftains is that of 'rebellion' against the imperial authority. The power and heroism of these chieftains, whether a warrior like Raṇmall or the protagonists of a *kāvya* composition, like Gaṅgadāsa or Maṇḍalika, is defined by their ability to challenge the imperial ruler's authority. This can be done, as Raṇmall or Gaṅgadāsa do, by directly challenging the sultan's claims over their territories or as Maṇḍalika, by reinforcing his position in his own local domains.

This notion of resistance continues in Forbes's representation of the Rajput warrior-kings as well. As my discussion of his text shows (Chapter 5), the term 'Rajput' seems to have carried a number of meanings for the colonial officer. The Rajput, in Forbes's narrative is a warrior in search of territories, a mercenary soldier, as well as a king with claims to a prestigious lineage and kingdom. The last of these, namely, the Rajput as a 'king' was thus only one part of Forbes's understanding of the term. In all three representations, however, the notion of 'resistance' either to an Islamic imperial authority or to a tyrannical or unfair overlord (as in the case of Sunugjee, Raṇmall's ancestor, or Jugdev Parmar) formed a common feature of the character of the Rajput.

This dissertation has analysed some key issues in the history of pre-colonial kingship in Gujarat through an analysis of literary representations. Several aspects of regional kingship, such as its material and practical dimensions, remain areas of future research.

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